Way of the Wicked
book seven:
tales of talingarde
Fire Mountain Games
Pathfinder®
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE
A Villainous Adventure Path by
Gary McBride & Michael Clarke

Cairn of Nythogar
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Horn of Abaddon
Throne of Chargammon
Seal Isle
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Vaasten
Cambrian Bay
Southern Heartlands
Branderscar
Brandelburn Fields
The Adarium
Matharyn
Lords of Camberlyn
The Kingdom of Talingarde
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Way of the Wicked

book seven: tales of talingarde

A Villainous Adventure Path

by

Gary McBride, words

and

Michael Clarke, art

Special Thanks:

Carl and Shirley McBride, Mike and Teresa Hall, Jim Hall, Michelle McBride-Hall, Kimberly Knight.

Fire Mountain Games LLC

www.firemountaingames.com

18795 SW Marko Ln

Beaverton, OR 97007

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"The villains were always ugly in books and movies. Necessarily so, it seemed. Because if they were attractive—if their looks matched their charm and their cunning—they wouldn't only be dangerous.

They would be irresistible."

--Nenia Campbell

Introduction: you again?

Greetings all and welcome to Book Seven of our six book evil adventure path, Way of the Wicked. The obvious question must be...why? Why, Gary, make a seventh book? Haven't you already expounded ad nasea on being the bad guy in the 600+ pages of the first books?

That is undeniably true and it is a fair question. However, the point of this book is that now we've got several years' worth of reviews under our belts and it has come to my attention that there are a few things that people consistently believe we either left out of the adventure path or material that could make it better. Add to that a smattering of stuff that we thought it would be nice to add and ... you have Book Seven.

You don't need this book.

That may seem a strange thing for a writer and publisher to put in an introduction, but it's the honest-to-Asmodeus truth. You can run Way of the Wicked just fine without a single word, image or handout from this book. What this work tries to accomplish is to make what hopefully you consider an already solid adventure path even better and more completely conceived.

We're reopening the vaults. We're adding more art of NPCs who've never been illustrated before. We have chosen a number of key handouts and created far more graphically pleasing versions of those. We're adding some small scenes, advice and interludes. We've given the ogre Grumblejack more to do throughout the adventure path and hopefully expanded the amount of fun you can have with his character even more.

The Town of Aldencross in Book never got a map in Book One, an oversight perhaps. Here there is a full page map and a gazetteer. There is even a small adventure hook that allows for another scene and a potentially interesting new discovery in Act Four of Book One.

And here at last is MinionQuest, all three parts published at last. MinionQuest is a series of humorous interludes that give your grim villains a chance to play their bumbling minions for a change. We've run these adventures at several conventions to much positive response. And here at last is your chance to either run these adventures as one shots or as additions to your campaign.

Further, we're fleshing out some more exotic play options like what if the PCs used the plane traveler's library in Book Four to make Talingarde a more technologically advanced kingdom? What if they try to build a wizard's college and make Talingarde more friendly to arcane magic? What if they try and permanently darken the island to make it a welcome haven for vampires?

Again, we've got you covered.

Maybe for some villains, revenge can only mean the utter and complete destruction of the kingdom that dared throw them in jail and tried to kill them. Thus, we end with a description of a dark ritual that your PCs can uncover that allow them not just to corrupt Talingarde, but to actually merge the entire island with Hell itself. This difficult ritual if completed will not just turn Talingarde into a devil's paradise, but completely destroy the place and forever doom the pitiful souls who live there. To the author, this seems a little drastic and I personally prefer whats in the main campaign, but now the choice is yours to make.

What you won't find in the book are major rewrites of the first six books. Even if there were room for such material in a hundred page book (and there most assuredly is not), the goal of this work is not to remake the campaign. Love it or hate it, Way of the Wicked remains what it was always intended to be - the campaign about being as bad as you want to be.

Altogether, I hope that this material makes that campaign even more fun to play and sparks new ideas for how you can be the bad guy. Here's to you, villains and blackhearts of the world. Now get out there and make Talingarde pay!

– Gary

Dark Beginnings

Revisiting the Campaign's Start

One page 7 of Book One, we leap straight into the PCs sitting shackled in a jail cell. This approach has advantages. After all, it gets our villains straight into the action and the danger of escaping from prison. Why equivocate any further? Why waste time dwelling on the past, when our focus is the gloriously wicked future that is ahead of us.

Still, the situation does beg the question ... how did we get to this cell? And since we now have to break out of this prison, did we see anything of use on the way in? Of course, all of we are going to present here is optional. You could just reply if the PCs ask how they got here: *"You were arrested by Talingarde, branded by the local magistrate, had a sackcloth bag thrown over your head, and were brought to Branderscar bound and blind."*

The End. Or rather, the beginning...

But there could be more. And maybe by going deeper into detail, we can more definitely establish the background of the PCs and make their history that much richer. This section seeks to answer those two questions in more detail and help you perhaps establish your band of villains as a group even before they enter Branderscar prison itself.

The most important thing here, don't let this part of the campaign drag. You still quickly want to get to the PCs in that cell, meeting Tiadora and getting to the important business of escaping. That remains where the campaign truly gets going. And you should consider who your players are. Are you playing with an impatient group who likes to cut to the action? Well, dwelling on background is the antithesis of that play style. No doubt, this sort of material will just be an annoyance and detract from the fun.

We begin by learning a little more about Talingarde itself...

Handout: Common Knowledge

On the next page you'll find a one page player handout you can give to PCs before the campaign begins. It is a broad, easy to read introduction to the land of Talingarde told from the point of view of an average citizen. Giving the PCs this page plus the PC map from Book One is a good "all you need to know" introduction to the campaign setting. It will also help them write up character backgrounds that are part of the world and give them plenty of location names to throw about. It is completely spoiler free as well.

Common Knowledge: Talingarde

Here are thirteen things everyone knows about the kingdom of Talingarde.

1. **Talingarde is an island.** It is about the size of England in the real world. It is an isolated place far from any other nations and outsiders are something of a rarity. In the south it enjoys a temperate clime, but the north of the island is quite cold and often blanketed with snow. Most people avoid this part of the island because it is populated by monsters.

2. **Talingarde is a lawful good nation.** Talingarde is a place of law and order. Violations of the law are punished severely but fairly. Talingarde is also a place that reveres the ideals of goodness. Clergy tend to the sick, often for no pay. Knights seek to protect the weak. Paladins are fabled individuals often featured in stories and songs. Talingarde might be, in all the world, the nation most committed ot the ideals of law and good.

3. **Talingarde is a monarchy.** It is ruled by good king Markadian V called the Brave. Markadian is a much beloved ruler from a well-established royal family known as the House of Darius.

4. **The King has no son.** He does however have a daughter, the beautiful princess Bellinda who is twenty years old and still unmarried. The king and the princess are the only full-blooded members of the royal family, though they have lots and lots of cousins and more distant family. The King's wife Lucinda died in child birth and he has never remarried.

5. **The Victor was the first Darian king.** Markadian V is actually the great grandson of Markadian I called the Victor who established the House of Darius and defeated the former royal house, the House of Barca, at Battle of Tamberlyn. The Victor remains beloved in Talingarde even decades after his death and you still see statues of him everywhere.

6. **The only god you are allowed to worship in Talingarde is Mitra.** Once other gods were worshipped, but that all came to an end under the House of Darius. Worship of Asmodeus, arch-enemy of Mitra, is outlawed and punishable by death by burning. Worshipping other non-evil gods is technically allowed but highly discouraged and very rarely seen.

7. **Mitra is the Lord of Light.** Mitra is the god of light, healing, goodness and leadership. He is usually depicted as having three aspects – a king, a healer or a living flame. Mitra is benevolent god and the arch-enemy of the First Tyrant, Asmodeus.

8. **The Church of Mitra is everywhere.** No town in Talingarde lacks a church of Mitra. The priests are almost always important men in their community. The second most powerful man in the kingdom is the High Cardinal of the Church, Vitallian of Estyllis. There word is not law but it is heard and respected and ignored only infrequently. The House of Darius and the Church of Mitra are allies dedicated to keeping Talingarde the bastion of goodness, law and Mitran devotion that it is today.

9. **Asmodeus is the enemy of Mitra and Talingarde.** Only one faith is banned and punishable by death within the kingdom of Talingarde – the faith of the devil-god Asmodeus, the lord of the Nine Hells. Before the House of Darius rose, Asmodeus was part of the pantheon of Talingarde. Asmodeus was not loved, but he was feared and respected alongside the other gods. Markadian IV called the Zealot outlawed the faith and unleashed the Inquisition against it. In the Asmodean Purges of the twenty years ago, every temple and high priest of Asmodeus was burned. The Temple of Asmodeus never recovered.

10. **Talingarde is defended by the Knights of the Alerion.** The Knights are a storied and legendary order of warriors who uphold the right, protect the weak and work to see justice done. They are a religious order and everyone has sworn oaths to Mitra. Uniquely, they are not all nobles. Even those of common blood may become a knight if they are deemed worthy. Not every Knight is a paladin, but their order has produced more paladins than any other.

11. **Talingarde has six regions.** The Island of Talingarde has six parts – The Cambrian Ports, The Heartland, the Borderlands, the Caer Bryr, the Savage North and the Lands of the Yutak. The Cambrian Ports are the three large cities of Talingarde that sit upon the Bay of Cambria. The Heartland is the farms and rural parts of Talingarde. The Borderlands are the northern reaches of the kingdom protected by the Watch Wall. The Caer Bryr is a great forest inhabited by the savage Iraen. The Savage North is a wasteland of ice ruled by monsters. And the Lands of the Yutak are scattered small northern islands inhabited by strange men very different from the men of Talingarde (or Talireans as they are sometimes known).

12. **Talingarde is protected by the Watch Wall.** Twelve fortresses mark the northern border of the kingdom of Talingarde. These fortresses control every point of access from the Savage North and defend the land from incursion by the bugbears and other monsters that live there. Markadian V called the Brave earned that name defending the Watch Wall.

13. **Talingarde is at peace.** But will it last?

How They Got Caught

On page 88 of Book One in the Player's Section, it says that the players should tell you how they got caught. And that's still a good idea. But let's emphasize the roleplaying and have all the PCs do that together. Instead of making this an informal process, let's make it the first thing players do at the first session.

Everyone should sit down at the game table (or post online before official game start if you're playing an online game). Put away the dice for just a moment, but keep 'em close. You'll need them again when we get to Branderscar Prison and our band of villains begins their daring escape efforts.

Pick the player to your right and ask them to reveal their chosen crime to all the other players (remember the list of criminal traits from Book One, pg. 91-93). And then ask the player to expand upon their character's crime by asking them three questions.. You should have a note card or piece of paper and pen ready during this time. Make a few notes for each player. You can use these notes to customize your campaign to your specific PCs later.

Here is an example of campaign customization done right. In Act Three of Book One, the PCs meet a patrol boat called "The Blade of St. Martius" captained by Edward Sambryl, a loyal soldier of Talingarde who (as the campaign is written) the PCs have never met or heard of before that moment on the seas. But suppose one of your players was captured for the crime of piracy or slave trading.

Captain Sambryl may have been the captain who chased down their raider or slave ship. It was Sambryl who boarded their boat, defeated them in hand to hand combat and took them prisoner. As they were being led away in irons to face Talirean justice, it was Sambryl who burned their prized ship to the waterline.

Now the encounter takes on a new complexion. Not only must the PC hide their identity, but they have an intense and personal motive for vengeance. It is no longer enough merely to talk your way out of the fight and sail on without making waves. That PC will want Captain Edward Sambryl dead! Now that is the stuff of exciting game play.

Towards that end, the first question you ask is **"What wicked deed made you a criminal?"** And give the player a few minutes to tell you the crime in detail. Hopefully, they've already read the common knowledge handout above and seen a map of Talingarde and so have a feel for the setting of this adventure path at least in broad strokes.

But still, try to not interrupt or correct the player unless they make a particularly egregious error about the world. Be versed enough in the lore of Talingarde that if they ask for example for the name of a major city where they had a criminal past you can supply one (Ghastenhall is a good choice in that instance). But mostly, it is your job to listen. What the PCs are really doing in this moment is telling you what they want to be important in the campaign. So listen and take notes.

The next question that follows the description of their cime is **"How did you get caught?"** Things obviously did not go perfectly for our fledgling villains. Let them describe how things went awry and they ended up being shipped away to Branderscar. Again, give them a minute or two to answer the question (they may have already answered it in first question and that's fine).

The most important part of this exercise is to make a note of any NPCs who were involved in their arrest. If they mention any unnamed knight or guard or soldier in their capture, try to tie in their capture to that famous witch hunter Sir Balin (who appears in Book One, pg. 35). That sets him up as a nemesis and will make Thorn's gift of vengeance all the more poignant during the Nine Lessons (Act Two of Book One). If they mention someone else (for example a priest of Mitra), maybe that priest could be at the Vale of Valtaerna in Book Three.

The final question is **"Did you have help?"** The answer could simply be a no or 'all my accomplices are dead'. And this is fine. There is nothing wrong with the PCs meeting for the first time in that cell in Branderscar prison. However, this is a natural moment to weave in another PC into the background of the character.

Remember, our ultimate goal is to create a party of villains who will cooperate over the course of this campaign. If the PCs have met before and perhaps worked together before, they will have yet another reason to realize that they must cooperate if they are execute vengeance upon noble Talingarde.

If you have two PCs with the same background this is when you should try tying their backstories together. Pirates served on the same ship. Cultists met in secret together. Criminals were in the same bandit gang. Whatever the relationship, let that second PC now tell their role in the crime and transition into that PC's own three questions. Did the first PC present a totally accurate version of what happen? How did things go down during their crimes and capture from their point of view?

And then move on to the next PC. Everyone gets a turn to speak and describe their deeds.

What They Saw on the Way In

Once captured, we are ready to bring the PCs to their cell in Branderscar. But do they discover anything useful en route that may aid their inevitable escape attempts? Read this to the players. This should be read before the introduction on page 7 of Book One.

And so you were captured for your wicked deeds and justly condemned. Perhaps at first, you weren't sure of your destination. Perhaps you did not know where they sent criminals as wicked and as unrepentant as you. Soon enough you would learn your fate.

You were thrown in a wagon, manacled and bound with other prisoners. You were hooded with a sackcloth bag. You were watched and ordered not to speak a word. Any disobedience was punished by a sharp knock to the head or in the gut. You could feel the movement of the wagon, but where were you headed?

Now have the PCs make the first skill check of the campaign. Roll a Perception check.

5 or less: *You remember nothing. You were knocked on the head shortly after you were thrown in the wagon and awaken, still a little groggy in a cell. Where were you? What was this place? And how did you get here? You must admit, the details are all a bit fuzzy...*

6 to 10: *Hooded and bound, there was little you could hear or see on your way into the prison. The wagon ride was rough and bumpy. The guards were impatient and loud. But you did hear something else ... the barking of a dog as the wagon came to a stop. And then they brought you, dragged you up stairs to your cell. Only then did they remove the hood and place in your in chains....*

11 to 15: *Hooded and bound, there was little you could see as you were brought to Branderscar prison. But you've always had sharp ears and you remember hearing quite a bit. There was the cry of a sea gull. You must be near the ocean. The wagon came to a stop and you heard the bark of a dog, which was quickly silenced by a command. That means a well-trained guard dog and judging from the sounds you heard later, more than one. The wagon began moving again and only a few minutes later did you arrive at your destination.*

You were dragged inside a building past more than one mocking guards. You went upstairs and heard the heavy thunk of a door being unlocked. Only then did they remove your hood and put you in your cell, chaining you with your arms above your head. You could smell the burning brazier in the next room. You were about to be marked as one of the forsaken. Welcome to Branderscar prison...

16 to 20: *Hooded and bound, you were thrown into the wagon. The sackcloth of your hood obscured much, but you could still hear much and see a little. There was the cry of a sea gull. You must be near the ocean. You could hear the waves break on a rocky shore line. The wagon stopped and you could hear the bark of a dog, instantly silenced by a command. There were well-trained guard dogs. You were led over a long bridge. They stopped again, though only briefly. You could hear a portcullis being lifted at some gatehouse. Finally they removed you from the wagon. You heard guards, mocking you as double doors were opened. You were led upstairs past more guards. There was the heavy thunk of a door being unlocked. Only then did they remove your hood and put you in your cell. You could smell the burning brazier nearby. You were about to be marked as one of the forsaken. Welcome to Branderscar prison...*

21 to 25: *Hooded and bound, you were led into a wagon. The hood was of rough sackcloth and though you could see little, your other senses were sharp and more than made up for your partial blindness. You could hear the waves break on a rocky shore line. The wagon stopped and you could hear the bark of a dog, instantly silenced by a command from a guard. There were well-trained guard dogs. You were led over a bridge, more than a hundred feet long. They switched back and forth and then stopped again, though only briefly. You could hear a portcullis being lifted at some sort of gatehouse. You heard soldiers on the wall of this castle, hailing the wagon. A password ... they exchanged a password though you could not hear what it was. Finally they removed you from the wagon. There were guards, mocking you as great double doors were opened. You were led upstairs...past more guards. There was the heavy thunk of a door being unlocked. Only then did they remove your hood and put you in your cell. You could smell the burning brazier nearby. You were about to be marked as one of the forsaken. Welcome to Branderscar prison...*

26+: *Hooded and bound, you were led into a wagon. They put a hood of a sackcloth, but you were clever enough (or lucky enough) that it had a strategically placed hole. You saw everything. And what you did not see, you heard.*

Note: With this result, break out the player's map of Branderscar. Give the PC a full description of their arrival, describing the guard house, the dogs, guards and so forth. Let the PC ask questions. The PC has learned a lot about this prison on their way in and is uniquely qualified to escape. However, once done, take the map away and don't restate what you have told them. It is their responsibility to remember and use what they have learned.

Once this perception check is done, then lead right into the campaign start on page 7 of Book One. It is time to begin your journey along the "Way of the Wicked".

New Illustrations

What follows is a series of new illustrations for NPCs in the Way of the Wicked Adventure Path. These illustrations are all intended to be used as PC handout to illustrate who they are talking to and to bring encounters to life. They also hopefully give you a chance to better describe and differentiate the various characters the PCs will meet throughout the Way of the Wicked.

Note that even with this series of illustrations, there are still NPCs who have no art. This is unavoidable in an adventure path as lengthy as this one. We could fill this entire book with illustrations of every minor character and creature your PCs might encounter and still not have everyone depicted!

If you wish to rectify this, there is a large body of fantasy art available online via (for example) tools like Google's image search that can plug the holes that remain. Keeping a small gallery of generic NPC illustrations can mean that you depict anyone the PCs meet and provide a rich sense of verisimilitude to your game world, regardless of what campaign you may be running.

Book One Illustrations

Nerianus, Triton Oracle: Act Three, page 40

White Tusk, ambitious young Yutak chieftain: Act Three, page 43

Kaitlyn Mott, wife of Captain Mott and local beauty, Act Four, page 57.

Note: Kaitlyn never gets statistics anywhere in the adventure path. However should you require them, the Barmaid in Paizo's GameMastery Guide with her Charisma increased to 16, her alignment changed to Chaotic Good and her Profession (barmaid) replaced with Profession (courtesan) would well represent this NPC.

Captain Franz Mott, unlikeable garrison officer at Balentyne, Act Four, page 62

Captain Zacharias "Zach" Eddarly, handsome and charming garrison officer at Balentyne, Act Four, page 62.

Book Two Illustrations

Halthus the Flayer, petrified death cultist, Act Two, page 41

Sir Valin Darian, Heir of the Victor and needed sacrifice to Vetra-Kali, Act Three, page 74.

Books One and Two

Captain Franz Mott

Captain Zach Elddarly

Kaitlyn Mott

Halthus the Flayer

White Tusk

Sir Valin Darian

Books Three and Four

Prince Gaius Vestromo
Vampire Prince of Ghastenhall

Sambethe
the Oracle of Mitra

Anteus
the Storm Giant

Duke Martin
of Daveryn

Keara Kilkerran

Polydorus the Seer

Book Three Illustrations

Prince Gaius Vestromo, vampire prince of Ghastenhall and immortal advisor to the current duke, Act Two, page 20

Sambeth, the aasimar oracle of Mitra in the Vale of Valtaerna and defender of the Gardens of Serenity, Act Four, page 63

Anteus the Storm Giant, who comes at the behest of the angel Ara Mathra and tries to reclaim Valtaerna, Act Five, page 65

Ghost Paladin Martyrs of the Cathedral of Mitra Made Manifest, defenders of the Cathedral, Act Five, page 68

Book Four Illustrations

Polydorus the Seer, half-elven diviner and Duke Martin's only hope of escape, Act One, page 17

Duke Martin of Daveryn, deposed ruler of the ruined city and someone the Fire-Axe would very much like to talk to, Act One, page 28

Keara Kilkerran, druid and emissary of the Iraen at the Adarium, Act Four, page 77

Book Five Illustrations

Eric the Falconer (aka Eric Varning), the Paladin's Wizard, Act Two, page 24

Book Six Illustrations

Cedrick Malthus, Agent of the Six Knot and Cardinal Thorn's chosen servant abroad, Act One, page 11

Lord Gaius Richter, ambitious noble and schemer in the Quisling Court, Act Two, page 29

Master Mallory Hawthorn, corrupt merchant and potential accomplice to the PCs dominion over Talingarde, Act Two, page 29.

Tuethia Stormsinger, kraken off the eastern coast of Talingarde and menace to the sea lanes, Act Two, page 53

Duke Hadrian of Ghaster, ruler of Ghastenhall and potential troublemaker, Act Two, page 56

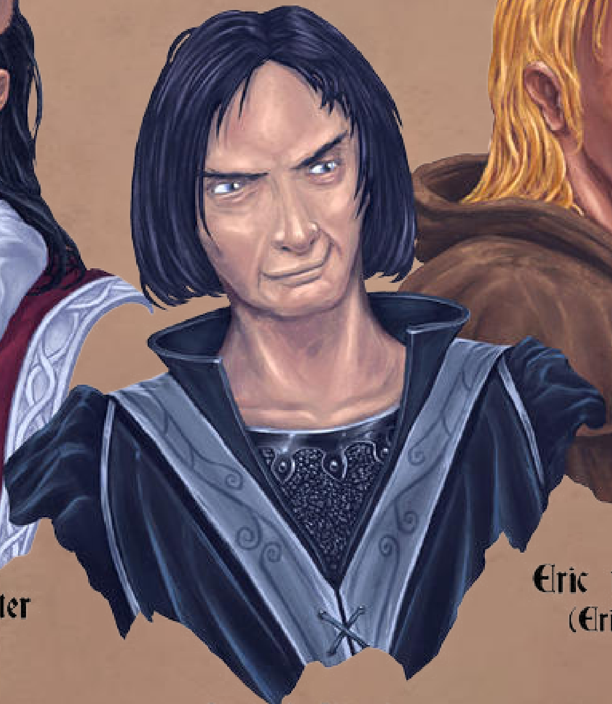
Note: The PCs might also meet Duke Hadrian in Book Four and his illustration could also be useful there.

Stephan the Shepherd, leader of the children's crusade and a faithful and humble devotee of Mitra, Act Two, page 61

MK

Books Five and Six

Lord Gaius Richter



Cedrick Malthus
Agent of the Sixth Knot

Eric the Falconer
(Eric Varning)

Duke Hadrian
of Ghaster

Master Mallory Hawthorn

Stephan
the Shepherd

New Handouts

During the original production of the Way of the Wicked adventure path, there were a few handouts that were very hastily finished. Here on the following six pages, we hope to remedy that bit of hasty production with full color handouts for your players.

Note that these handouts present no new information regarding the campaign. All this text is included, albeit in a more bare-bones style, in the books. Instead, these eight items are intended to make existing handouts more interesting and to convey more impact when you present them to the PCs.

Here is another secret of the campaign that can aid in making further handouts. Virtually every piece of art in Way of the Wicked has been made from the point of view of the players and what they see at a given moment. Thus, the art can be extracted from the PDFs and printed out to make a rich source of handouts throughout the campaign.

Almost every time the PCs meet an important NPC or reach a critical moment, you'll have handouts ready that can aid in the visualization of the campaign. Printing out these images does take a little time and cost some money due to ink and paper (and of course assumes you have access to a decent color printer). But if you make a nice series of handouts that you keep and label exactly what they mean with a small description on the back, by campaign's end you'll have a set of full color images with notes unique to your particular campaign.

This can be something to keep. Bind the pages together in a notebook or a folder. If you're truly ambitious or you're lucky enough to have a PC that keeps a journal, juxtapose the handouts with your own write-ups of each session or the PC's relevant journal entries. You'll end up with a unique record of you and your friends own wicked adventures. Years later, you can pull out this notebook and hopefully be reminded of the good times you had being a bad guy and making Talingarde suffer.

This is not good advice for just this campaign, by the way. I've been playing roleplaying games for more than twenty five years. I still have journal entries and character sheets from campaigns of the past. Stepping though those artifacts and handouts is, for me, liking stepping into my own past. It reminds me of friends some of whom I still know and other who are gone. In short, they are treasured personal possessions.

Be sure, by the way, to always include a list of your players (including their character name and real name).

Handouts

Book One

#1: The Pact of Thorns

This is the contract that the PCs make with Cardinal Thorn in Act Two of Book One.

Book Two

#2: The Dirges of Apollyon

This is the ritual that the PCs discover that they need to perform in the Horn of Abaddon to bring Vetra-Kali to our world once more.

#3: The Journal of Finneas Greenhold

This is the journal of the gnome sorcerer and leader of the Banner Verdant, Finneas Greenhold. It likely plays an important role in realizing the depths of the treachery of the Seventh Knot.

Book Three

#4: Thorn's Letter

In Act One of Book Three, Thorn writes the PCs a letter. This is that letter, written in the master's own hand.

#5: The Lord-Abbot's Journal

This is a page from the misplaced journal of the head of the Order of St. Macarius, discovered in the private quarters of Earnan MacCathlain. It is potentially critical view into the mind of one of the PC's more deadly foes.

Book Four

#6: The Lord of Eagles' Letter

This poorly tanned bit of leather is scratched by the claws of a giant eagle and was sent to the Seer Polydorus in doomed Daveryn. In Act One of Book Four, the PCs may discover it and it could serve as a vital link to rescuing Jeratheon Knightsbane and thus gaining the aid of the great wyrm, Chargammon.

#7: The Dragon's Poem

This is the inscription carved upon the great wooden doors inside the tower of the dragon Eiramanthus. This inscription is the key to opening the Dragon's vault and claiming his hoard.

Book Six

#8: The Lady Jezerael's Private Correspondence

The Lady Jezerael della Torre sends whichever PC (or puppet of the PCs) is the King of Talingarde a private letter. This is that letter. To make the prop truly memorable, take a dab of a woman's perfume and place it on the letter (a little goes a long way here) before handing it to your PCs.

Behold on this day ________ in the eighth age of this world a perpetual Compact is made between Cardinal Adrastus Thorn (hereafter the Master) and those who would be bound to him as his acolytes (hereafter the Bound). Both the Master and the Bound shall hold fast and true to this Compact through all trial and tribulation. By blood and soul the Bound commit to the Compact and swear that it shall never be undone.

The Bound shall know and understand **the Four Loyalties**.

The First Loyalty is to their patron and god – mighty **Asmodeus**, first among the fallen, prince of the nine hells, our father below. They shall do all that can be done to further his worship and his glory.

The Second Loyalty is to their master – He who is called the Cardinal Adrastus Thorn, High Priest of Asmodeus in Talingarde. They shall do the Master no harm and obey his every commandment as long as those commandments do not clash with their First Loyalty.

The Third Loyalty is to their companions – the other Bound who serve alongside them. The Bound shall deal with each other fairly and honorably as long as doing so does not clash with their first or second loyalties. All treasure, wealth and reward garnered in their exploits will be equally shared with all of the Bound who aided in its acquisition.

The Fourth Loyalty is to themselves – for Asmodeus is the Lord of Ambition and all who serve him should strive to become great and powerful in his service as long as doing so does not clash with their first, second or third loyalties. By their weakness, ye shall know the unworthy.

The Bound swear that they cleave to and uphold the Four Loyalties even in the face of death and damnation.

The Master swears that as long as the Four Loyalties are upheld, he shall reward the Bound as they deserve for their deeds.

Thus it is written, and thus it shall be.

We being of sound mind and free will do so swear and let they who violates this Compact know all the wrath of **Hell unending**.

Signed,

Adrastus Thorn

The Dirges of Apollyon

Behold our shame that we, the Sons of the Pale Horseman, failed in our darkest hour to defend our prince the undying and ever malevolent Vetra-Kali Eats-the-Eyes. But I have seen it! I have seen the road to repentance! **666 prayers.** *Three per day will break the hated Seal. With each prayer bathe the seal in unholy water and intone the dirge.*

At the stroke of midnight each day call forth the **Supplication to Darkness.** *Pray to the darkness so that we shall be forgiven. Upon the first midnight make the first sacrifice – one of our own blood – so that Vetra-Kali will know we are repentant.*

At the first light of each dawn call forth the **Cursing of the Light.** *Answer the spread of the shining lord's light with our unyielding defiance. Upon the 111th Curse make the second sacrifice – a true believer of Mitra – so that the cursed god of the invaders will know that we fear him not and that his power to hold our master at bay is ending.*

At dusk as darkness returns each day cry forth the **Call Across the Void.** *Recite the name of Vetra-Kali so that he may hear us and return. With the final Call offer the third sacrifice – one of the Victor's own blood. By the same blood that caged him so shall our master be freed.*

Let ye with wisdom understand. Once the final prayer is uttered upon the 222nd dusk, Vetra-Kali will begin his long traverse across the great wheel. At the stroke of midnight on that day he will emerge into his Sanctum and the Seal shall shatter.

Blessed day! Be ready, my brothers. His eyes have been stolen from him. Return them and the Prince will honor ye with one task for each.

For the **Eye of Vigilance** *ask only for his mercy upon we mortals and plead that he do ye and yours no harm. For his wrath will be great.*

For the **Eye of Hatred** *ask for his greatest gift – the Tears of Achlys so that once more every corner of the world may know his mercy.*

For the **Eye of Withering** *ask what ye will for in his gratitude he must answer your charge.*

And then behold, the Prince restored. All shall know his blessings of pestilence and despair.

-R. Kappelbrenner

What an interesting development today. We were approached by a so-called holy man full of talk about visions and angels and so forth. He claimed these spirits had driven him to stop the wickedness going on in the Horn and to rally us to our "destiny". Mentioned us almost by name the angels did! I'm flattered.

He delivered us his pitch and then gave to us an immense pile of information including maps, names and so much more. Really he did everything but give the keys to the front door.

Of course I don't accept such gifts without a fair degree of skepticism. I had Vethia trail the "Holy Man" and our fears turned out to be justified. She saw this angel-speaker slip into a side alley and transform back into a dark haired and much younger human.

My tracker followed the human through the streets of Farholde and saw the young man rendezvous with a strange white haired woman with a white raven on her shoulder. He called her "Z".

They didn't say much to each other. All he said was "It is done. The Ninth is finished." I am unsure exactly what that means, but clearly we are being used in some sort of double-cross between various factions of the cult that occupies the Horn. Ah, evil-doers. They never change.

So, they want us to be their assassins, eh? Well, it's a job we don't mind doing. We'll be cautious about this information obviously. But I think it's likely to pan out. They wouldn't want their dupes to fail after all, would they? Of course, when were done, I think we'll pay the "holy man" a little visit as well. Vethia is pretty sure the woman in white must be staying in the nearby inn - "The Auld Briarhall" in Auld'Irey.

What a piece of work is my elven tracker! She tracked a shape changer through almost a half mile of city, managed to eavesdrop on a private guarded conversation and reported back without even a ripple of trouble. Hah! Remind me to give that girl an almost even share of the treasure! Tomorrow we attack the Horn. I can feel it my bones. This is the big one! After this, I just know that our wee little band will never be the same.

To My Ninth:

Since that day you arrived filthy and famished upon my doorstep I have always seen within you great potential. And today you prove me correct once more. You have the Daemon's Gift! I could not be more pleased. You have in your possession a terrible weapon and now, we must see it used.

Get thee to Ghastenhall with all haste. Therein seek Barnabus Thrain, master of the Stygian Knot. He awaits you in the Library of Ghaster. Ask him whom he serves. He will answer "only knowledge." Yes, he is a priest of Mitra, but fear not – he has seen the power of our cause. Into Thrain's hand deliver the Gift. He has agents who will see that the Tears are delivered to where it may do the most good. He will have something for you as well – a token of my esteem.

Then I command you: wait in Ghastenhall, avoiding the eyes of our enemies. You will have one month to rest and regain your strength's full measure. Use it well. Prepare yourself for your next mission for it shall be thy greatest test yet.

The Tears of Achlys is a scalpel, my Ninth, and with it we will cut the hated Mitran faith from the heart of Talingarde. When the month is past, Tiadora will fetch you and bring you to audience with the Fire-Axe. He will give to you the kernel of an army. Build upon it! Recruit any who can aid you and once your army is ready, with the first gale of winter – you march to the Vale of Valtaerna, the most holy site in all of Talingarde.

They will not expect a winter assault. Break the Watchtower of Saintsbridge, invade the Vale and during winter's merciless heart destroy everyone in that sacred place. Leave no witness making it look like a bugbear raid. Violate the holy heart of the Cathedral of Mitra Made Manifest and leave not a single soul alive. By the time winter is ended, the Tears will be well spread across Talingarde. The people desperate for respite will run to the simpering Mitrans begging for relief. And they will find in your wake only death and ashes, my Ninth.

Do all as I command and the time of our victory draws ever nearer. Commit my commands to heart and then burn this letter.

-Thorn

With the death of the Phoenix, the blessed Ara Mathra has retreated to the Holiest of Holies and has called forth a conflagration no mortal nor devil nor even angel can cross. I know some of the men believe that this reveals him a coward. But I know the truth. He must survive or all is lost.

If even one of the three sacred flames survives, then all can be rekindled. The Order of St. Macarius will weather this storm and emerge all the stronger for it.

No one suffers more than he. I see this. He agonizes that he must remain here and guard the Undying Flame. Cowardice? Hah! Who amongst us is strong enough to do what he does now? It would be base anger that drives him to slay the evil doers that assault us. Instead he has taken the victory from them. They cannot win. The slaughter of Saintsbridge has earned them nothing but damnation. Only a saint could pierce the flame!

I've tarried here too long. I must return to my prayers. Soon the ghost-martyrs will rise I will take back Valtaerna. Beware sons and daughters of darkness, I come for you!

To Polydorus, Seer of Daveryn, Unwinged but wise:

Behold, I the Stormborn King need your counsel. I have taken Chargammon's whelp, the black dragon Jeratheon Knightsbane. He foolishly tried to lay claim to my dominion and by talon and thunderbolt did we humble this night hunter. My heart speaks to slay this monster and see his evil forever removed from both earth and sky. Still, I worry this would bring the wrath of his sire.

So I send to you. What say the stars? Will the death of Jeratheon invite disaster or will it bring only justice and relief? I await your word.

I remain the Lord of All Eagles and the Stormborn King

Would I trade three kings' crowns
for the Dark earth of her wilds?
Would I trade war's red renown
for Even one of her smiles?
Would I trade five thousand ships
for her vast sea white with foam?
Would I trade a thousand worlds
for a fine day spent at home?

Your Most August Majesty,

I know that it is most inappropriate for a lady of the court to contact your person, but I could not contain what I felt last night. It was a spark within my heart and it refuses to die. I felt something that goes beyond mere words but it is my sincerest wish that you felt it too.

You can reach me at the Rosebauer Estate within the Golden Bow, which I have rented for a time during my stay in your fair land. I hope that you find reason to call.

Yours truly,
Jezerael Della Torre
Countess Montesano, etc.

The Lost art of Props

Way of the Wicked can be greatly enhanced as a play experience by making or purchasing a few props to represent key items the PCs will encounter over the course of the campaign. The goal is not try to recreate every item or treasure the PCs encounter. That is of course ludicrous. Instead, here are a few recommended minor art projects that can be used to enhance the flavor and verisimilitude of the game.

The Big Map: The PC's map in Book One is a great item to print out poster-size (this is easily done at any print shop) and mount on a piece of cardboard. It already contains the three major cities and small dots representing the fortresses of the Watch Walls, as well as the major regions. Always refer to the map as the PCs travel and make sure they always have a sense of where they are.

As the PCs discover hidden locations, carefully note those on the map. By campaign's end, you'll have a customized map of your campaign unique to your own game. Your only problem will be that all your PCs will want that map for their own.

The Pact of Thorns: Print out a copy of the new and improved Pact of Thorns handout (see above) on fine parchment or resume' paper. Then acquire a calligraphy pen filled with red ink and let the PCs actually sign their names in blood to an infernal contract. It can be a memorable and uniquely villainous moment early in the campaign and truly set the tone for the adventures that are to come.

The Clay Seal: With a small amount of minor sculpting, you can make one of the clay seals (illustrated on page 37 of Book One) that Tiadora is always giving the PCs to break to let her know their mission is complete. Air hardening clay is not expensive and sculpting these roughly made seals is mostly a matter of a little patience.

When Tiadora gives them a seal, your PCs will be impressed when they literally get to see and feel what that seal looks like. Of course, you should probably encourage your players not to actually break the prop, unless you feel up to making more than one.

The Eyes of Vetra-Kali: Inexpensive green glass gems are available at hobby shops and online. With a relatively small investment, you can acquire three vaguely eye-shaped jewels (illustrated on page 50 of Book Two) that your PCs can hold and examine. These physical representations can also be used to express who has the actual jewels at any given moment. Simply announce that if you are holding the jewel, your character has the jewel.

The Tears of Achlys: Potion bottles are available for sale online or at hobby shops. You can easily fill such a vial with water or oil mixed with green food coloring to give it a suitable murky and unwholesome appearance. You want to make sure such a bottle is tightly stoppered so it will not spill and make (quite literally) an unholy mess.

When Vetra-Kali hands them this deadly plague at the end of the ritual, he could actually hand them a physical item that they can look at and examine. The fact that the PCs can hold the doom of Talingarde in their own hand can make for a memorable and perhaps even terrifying roleplaying moment.

The Egg of the Phoenix: You can buy glass eggs for relatively little (they are often sold as paperweights). Locate a red-tinted one and combine it with a small LED light (often available at electronic shops) and you'll have a magic, glowing phoenix egg that the PCs can discover in the nest of Suchandra, the Fire-That-Never-Dies. Particularly if presented in a darkened room, you would truly have a treasure that would fire your PCs imagination.

Tiadora's True Name: In Book Five, the PCs can discover the true name of the handmaiden devil Tiadora. It is simply a slip of paper with "Zaa'ara-Zia'athra-Jez'arabel". written in "infernal script" (pick a nice evil-looking font). Print out the phrase on a piece of parchment and trim it into a strip using a pair of scissors.

The strip is found inside a small iron box, but really any small chest or container will suffice. By having a physical prop, you'll emphasize the importance of the name and it will give PCs a chance to play out confronting the devil with her own true name and binding her to their service after years of enduring her taunts and jibes. It is payback that been long in coming.

Sign of the Resistance: In Book Six, the PCs (then rulers of Talingarde) will uncover evidence of a resistance forming against them amidst the common folk of Talingarde. The sign of that resistance is a piece of cloth marked with a white unicorn (this is illustrated on page 41 of Book Six). You can make one of these emblems quite easily.

Take a piece of sack cloth and white fabric marker (available at craft stores and of course online) and draw a crude white unicorn. It doesn't have to be a masterpiece. In fact a crudely drawn unicorn will well represent the home-made grassroots resistance that is rising up against the villains. The PCs will be able to roleplay out having one of their minions present them with a sign and their anger at being defied within their own usurped kingdom.

Grumblejack Lives!

Here are twenty hopefully entertaining and perhaps revealing events for your favorite ogre to say and do during the course of the campaign. The secret to using these interludes is to use them sparingly. Grumblejack is not the focus of the campaign. That should remain the PCs. But if these little moments can add needed levity and help enrich the NPC, so be it.

Grumblejack Meets Tiadora

Whenever Grumblejack meets Tiadora for the first time (perhaps in Book One, Act Two at the manor house), read this:

Tiadora looks disapprovingly at the ogre. "You seemed to have gained a pet, dearest," says Tiadora snidely.

"Grumblejack not pet. Grumblejack fearsome monster!"

"A monster? Hah! Get in my way, little ogre, and I'll show you what a real monster looks like. Now, my slaves will show you to your rooms. And maybe we'll even find a place to cage up your pet ogre."

Grumblejack watches her leave and leans over and whispers in a PCs ear (likely whoever actually freed him from his cell). "Grumblejack not like her. Someday, Grumblejack eat her."

Grumblejack Boards a Boat

Likely this happens when Grumblejack boards the Frosthamar at the beginning of Book One, Act Three on the way to meet the Fire-Axe. However, this can happen any time that Grumblejack is required to first board a sailing vessel because of the PCs.

The ogre pauses and looks at the boat suspiciously. "Grumblejack never been on boat before." He stops at the gang plank and seems unwilling to take another step.

Let the PCs have a moment to speak to Grumblejack. They can encourage him or chide him or make fun of him. But whatever they say, Grumblejack eventually has a personal epiphany.

"So, if Grumblejack not get on boat, Grumblejack has to stay in manor with Tiadora and miss out on all the merry murder ahead, yes?"

Hopefully, some PCs answers this rather obvious question with something approaching a "yes".

Grumblejack nods. "Then boats not so bad," and quickly boards the Frosthamar. The ogre staggers about for a little while barely able to walk but quickly finds his sea legs.

Grumblejack vs. Balentyne

This happens any time at the beginning of Book One, Act Four whenever the PCs begin plotting how to break the defenses of the Watchtower of Balentyne.

Grumblejack snorts. "Grumblejack get this straight. Balentyne just full of human soldiers, yes?"

The PCs again have a chance to answer.

"Hmmm.... no problem. We sneak in one night, Grumblejack eat them all up."

The ogre seems to find this idea hysterical and begins to laugh like he just made some profoundly funny joke. He takes a big bite of a joint of mutton he's been carrying around in pack for gods know how long.

Grumblejack Needs to Be Sneaky

At some point (perhaps while infiltrating Balentyne), the PCs are likely going to try to include Grumblejack in a plan that calls for the ogre to be stealthy. Of course, Grumblejack is anything but sneaky. As a starting ogre he has a -1 to his Stealth skill rolls and even as he gains levels in fighter and adds the half-fiend template, it is unlikely that this skill will get much better.

Still, Grumblejack does not acknowledge the obvious fact that he couldn't sneak up on a deaf man, yet alone attentive guards. And so he says this, especially if someone disparages his "skill" at stealth.

"Grumblejack have no problem with plan. Grumblejack quiet as death! One time, Grumblejack sneak up on a farmer to steal sheep. The farmer turned around and look me straight in the eyes. He so scared, little man make water. Grumblejack asked him if he saw anything. Farmer say no.

"See...Grumblejack VERY stealthy."

Grumblejack Converts to Asmodeus

This exchange can happen almost anywhere in the campaign. It is best brought up any time the PCs are already discussing religion.

"Hmmm..." says the ogre suddenly suprising contemplative. "Grumblejack not know much about the gods. Men who wear Mitran suns always hated Grumblejack, so Grumblejack hate them back. What gods like ogres?"

The PCs can answer with any gods they care to. Grumblejack has no knowledge (religion) skill and knows virtually nothing about faith or religion of any sort. Of course, it is very likely that at least one cleric, oracle or anti-paladin of Asmodeus is in your party. And this is a perfect opportunity for them to prosletyze to Grumblejack. Let the PC speak and describe Asmodeus however they wish. When they are finished, then continue:

The ogre listens to you with a deep furrowed brow. "So, Asmodeus likes ogres, eh? Can Grumblejack still fight and worship Asmodeus?"

Hopefully someone answers yes.

"Can Grumblejack eat people and worship Asmodeus?"

The PCs may want to qualify this to include not us, but again the answer is probably yes.

"Can Grumblejack get revenge on people who throw him in prison and worship Asmodeus?"

Again a definite yes. If there are any "no's" to these three questions Grumblejack grunts *"Have to think about it"* and drops the subject. If all three questions are answered in the affirmative then Grumblejack speaks again.

"Then Grumblejack worship Asmodeus." The mood of the ogre immediately shifts from contemplative to joyous. Grumblejack begins dancing around with almost childlike glee. "Yay! Now Grumblejack have god too! Nobody stop Grumblejack with god on his side! Wait ... isn't Asmodeus god of badness, devils and telling fibs? Does worshipping devil-god make Grumblejack bad person?"

Whatever the PCs answer to this question, Grumblejack is quick on the uptake.

"Grumblejack OK with that."

The next time Grumblejack defeats a humanoid enemy, he fashions himself an Asmodean star out of finger bones and starts wearing it as his "holy symbol". The ogre is now a devout if unsophisticated worshipper of Asmodeus.

Grumblejack Eats a Prisoner

This scene can happen anytime the PCs take a prisoner. It works best if the PCs have taken multiple prisoners, for example members of a patrol out of Balentyne or peasants abducted from Farholde. Grumblejack, preferably while the PCs are discussing what to do with the prisoners, eats one.

The large-sized half-fiendish ogre can actually gobble down a medium sized human with surprising speed. It is literally a case of one moment the prisoner is there. And a few moments later he is not. Of course, if there are any other bound prisoners who witnessed this horror, they are beside themselves in terror. When confronted about what happened to the prisoner, Grumblejack has this to say for himself.

"Umm... he ... escape?" says the ogre unconvincingly.

Any sort of Sense Motive check can reveal this for the painfully obvious lie that it is. Finally, the ogre confesses.

"It not Grumblejack's fault! Grumblejack hungry and all you feed Grumblejack is yucky bread and meat dead so long it not even bleed. Grumblejack sorry. Not do it again."

The PCs could try to punish Grumblejack of course. But the ogre is a very slow learner when it comes to not eating prisoners.

Grumblejack In Love

The Fire-Axe's horde includes a few ogres and one of them is a gigantic bone-through-the-nose almost shockingly ugly female ogre named Karlotta Bonegrinder. It is love at first sight.

Karlotta expresses her interest in Grumblejack by hissing like a cornered tigress and throwing a spear at him. Grumblejack continues the courtship by pulling the spear out of his minor flesh wound, licking the blood off the stone spear-head and breaking it over his knee. They then attack one another, wrestling fiercely until finally Grumblejack (who is fairly beaten up by this point) gets the upper hand and Karlotta flees. Grumblejack purrs as Karlotta departs the fray, *"What a woman!"*

From that moment on, Grumblejack is courting Karlotta. He keeps his eyes open for potential gifts for the ogress. Appropriate gifts include heads from impressive foes, alcohol or weaponry (Karlotta favors clubs and spears). Karlotta remains with Fire-Axe's horde and so every time the PCs meet up with Fire-Axe, Grumblejack spends time with Karlotta. When the time comes to betray the horde in Book Six, Grumblejack (if he's still alive) will plead to spare Karlotta. Failing to do this make a permanent enemy of Grumblejack.

Grumblejack Finds a Bar

In Farholde there is a bar that will actually serve an ogre. This is Lord Drowington's Manor (see Book Two, page 98). Up to this point in the campaign, Grumblejack has had no use for money. But as soon as he finds this place, he spends as much time there as he can manage and asks which ever PC he is the closest to for some cash.

Grumblejack is immediately a hit with the patrons as well, surprisingly enough. The ogre is actually quite funny and his feats of massive strength wow the audience. And this is the sort of crowd that doesn't care that Grumblejack breaks the odd piece of furniture. Rubal Thraam, the proprietor of the bar, even encourages the ogre to come around as he notices that the monster brings in big (and thirsty) crowds.

Of course, the PCs may not be so pleased. Grumblejack's stories sometimes include tales of their exploits. He mentions, for example, his escape from Branderscar Prison. And even though no one really believes the ogre, this may be information the PCs don't want spread around. Stopping the ogre from coming to "Da' Manner" as Grumblejack calls the place makes the ogre sullen. However, letting the ogre keep coming can be a fine justification for how any of the enemy adventuring parties in Book Two find out information about the PCs.

Grumblejack Makes Friends

This event can happen at any time in the campaign, but most likely happens after a large battle where Grumblejack plays a noteable part. Grumblejack is actually very grateful to the PCs for all they have done for him. You see, from Grumblejack's point of view, the main character of this campaign is, perhaps unsurprisingly, Grumblejack himself. He sees himself as a hero-ogre on a great adventure and he is glad the PCs are a part of it. This is how the ogre expresses that gratitude.

Grumblejack pauses from the serious business of wiping blood off his massive sword and turns to face you. "What great things we do! When the history of all ogres is carved upon a cave wall, all of this will be long remembered!

"Grumblejack would not have made it half as far as this without his friends. If not for you, Grumblejack might have died in filthy prison cell with great deeds undone! Now, together, we do great and terrible deeds!

"Grumblejack grateful that you friends share in his adventures!"

From that moment on, Grumblejack frequently calls the PCs his friend and becomes unwaveringly loyal. He still doesn't like Tiadora however.

Grumblejack and the Fireaxe's Drinking Contest

This could happen any time that Grumblejack and Sakkarot Fire-Axe are in the same place. The Fire-Axe, during a meal, stretches and yawns and downs a chalice of strong wine. He then comments:

"You call this strong wine? I've had a gallon and I can barely feel it," boasts the bugbear warlord.

The ogre cocks an eye. "Yeah? Grumblejack hear bugbears can't hold their liquor."

"Then you've been speaking to fools, ogre," says the bugbear with a sneer. "Certainly, a strong bugbear is more than a match for the weaker races ... like ogres."

Grumblejack laughs. "Weaker ... hah! If you were to match me drink for drink, you'd be dead drunk before the night is half over."

"Boasting is easy. Prove your words, ogre!" And Sakkarot Fire-Axe slams his empty chalice on the table.

Grumblejack is quick to answer, slamming down a leather drinking jack. "Pour wine! Grumblejack look forward to seeing what your lunch looks like."

And so the drinking contest began.

Grumblejack has the advantage in pure stamina. He's large and has a Con 20 (+5) as opposed to Fire-Axe's 19 (+4). But the Fire-Axe is smarter and more cunning and knows how to pace himself better. So, it's a close fight.

Not that it matters. By about half way through the contest, both of them are roaring drunk and teaching the other drinking songs in the tongues of giants and goblins.

Still one does eventually win. Roll a 1d6. On a 1-3 Grumblejack passes out first and Sakkarot remarks in a slurred voice, *"See, I'm not in charge just because I'm handsome..."*

On a 4-6, Grumblejack wins. *The ogre snorts. "Grumblejack greatest drinker in entire ...." The ogre stops and then immediately runs for the outdoors where pukes up his guts. He returns, smelling terrible and still stumbling drunk. "Grumblejack hungry. What say we raid another town and get snacks?"*

From that day forward, Grumblejack and Sakkarot are friends. Every time the PCs and the Sakkarot get together, if Grumblejack is present, the pair spends a night together drinking. Any time Grumblejack is with the PCs, they receive a +2 to any social skill checks with Sakkarot.

Grumblejack Nearly Dies

This could happen at any time in the campaign. If the ogre follows the PCs around long enough, eventually he will be taken to less than zero hit points and saved only by the healing magic of the PCs. The first time that happens, this occurs.

The beaten, battered ogre slowly opens his eyes. He speaks slowly and uncertainly. "Grumblejack still … alive? You save Grumblejack?"

The PCs have a chance to answer. Perhaps they simply answer 'yes' or perhaps they explain what the ogre missed or perhaps the even chastise the ogre for falling in combat. Or perhaps they say nothing. Whatever the case, the ogre listens thoughtfully for a moment and then grunts a reply, perhaps only to himself.

"Someone has beaten Grumblejack before. Someone has hunted, hated and hurted Grumblejack before. But up until today, nobody ever save Grumblejack before. You think Grumblejack owe you something?"

The ogre eyes the healer or whoever is nearby suspiciously. And the beams a gigantic, toothy smile.

"You right! Grumblejack owe you his friendship! Hah! Maybe someday Grumblejack save you right back!" The ogre laughs uproariously at the idea.

Grumblejack vs. Ghastenhall

In Book Three, the PCs spend a month in Ghastenhall. Ghastenhall is a cosmopolitan city, but not so accepting that an ogre roaming the streets will not arouse suspicion. As a result, Grumblejack is almost certainly banished to the Crowley Estate or the boat. Grumblejack is not happy about this, but accepts it with a grunt. What can he do after all?

However, after a month, the ogre is more than a little stir crazy. He has utterly wrecked one room of the Crowley Estate and started making little sculptures out of the broken furniture bits. And the first time the PCs mention leaving, the ogre sighs a breath of relief.

"Grumblejack ready to leave, ready to get back to business of merry murder. Promise me where ever we go next, Grumblejack get to kill something."

Since the PCs are likely headed to the Vale of Valtaerna, the answer to this inquiry is likely an enthusiastic yes. Grumblejack is overjoyed.

"Grumblejack ready! Gimme more monsters, pally-dins, dragons, whatever and Grumblejack ready. What Grumblejack truly fear is more vacation."

Grumblejack's Lucky Charm

After death of the angel Ara Mathra at the end of Book Three, Grumblejack approaches the corpse of the fallen outsider. He pulls up the lifeless head of the angel and slices off a handful of the angel's golden locks. He quickly ties the hair into a makeshift knot and stuffs the trophy into his pouch.

Over the next few days, the ogre works intently whenever he has a spare moment, braiding the hair into a string. After that time, he has several feet of angel-hair twine. He uses that twine to hold his home-made holy symbol of Asmodeus (perhaps the one made of finger bones, see above). If asked why he does this, he simply grunts this answer.

"Maybe it bring Grumblejack luck. Or maybe, when Grumblejack dies and ogre goes to hell, he will show Asmodeus his angel-hair holy symbol and the devil will be impressed."

Grumblejack Gets a New Magical Sword

There is a good chance in Book Four that Grumblejack acquires a new magical blade (see Grumblejack's Bet on page 29 of Book Four). Or this event could happen at some other point when the PCs give the ogre a new magical weapon or he scavenges some other treasure to be his new weapon of choice.

Regardless, in the doomed wreckage of Daveryn, bearing his new magical weapon, Grumblejack takes a moment to test his prized new implement of murder.

The ogre takes a moment and assesses his new weapon. He feels the weapon's weight. His eyes gleam with appreciation.

"Pretty," says Grumblejack.

And with that, Grumblejack suddenly lunges out and with the speed of a cobra grabs one of the countless goblins that scramble through the ruins of Daveryn, scavenging for trinkets and food. The goblin squeals angrily but can do little to resist the ogre's iron grasp.

Grumblejack throws the goblin up in the air as effortlessly as tossing a child's toy. The goblin flies up, still squirming and crying, and then reaching the top of its arc begins to plummet back to earth. The ogre sizes up his target, carefully aims, and then with a single swipe of his new prized weapon, neatly cuts the goblin in twain. Gory goblin bits splutter to the ground nearby.

Grumblejack smiles. "Very pretty," says the ogre with a wicked smile.

Grumblejack Roasts a Giant Eagle

The natural place for this to happen is in Book Four, after the defeat of the Stormborn King at the beginning of Act Two. But it could also happen in Book Two if the PCs encounter giant eagles led by Brastius Star-Feather (see page 79). After the battle is over...

Grumblejack surveys the carnage and pauses for a moment. There is a loud grumble from his stomach, loud enough to be startling to anyone nearby the ogre.

"Hungry," mutters Grumblejack. "Ah...big chicken."

Grumblejack selects one of the fallen eagles and begins to busily pluck out large feathers in massive handfuls. After a few minutes, he has plucked, bled and butchered one of the giant eagles. A few more minutes after that, impaled upon an old spear he found in a corner, the eagle is roasting over a large fire. Grumblejack tends the impaled once majestic bird like as attentively as a chef at a fine restaurant.

As its skin browns and the environs fill with the smell of roasting eagle, the ogre seems quite pleased with himself. Finally when the cooking is complete, Grumblejack pulls off a leg big enough to serve as a great club. He takes a big bite and smiles approvingly.

"Big chicken good. Want some?" he asks offering the part a slab of eagle meat big enough to choke a dire tiger.

Grumblejack, Lord of All Ogres

At some point, Grumblejack is likely to meet the dragon Jeratheon Knightsbane, son of Chargammon (perhaps after the PC free him in Book Four). Jeratheon and Grumblejack do not get along as this brief scene illustrates.

"So, now we travel with big lizard, eh?" says Grumblejack with a laugh.

"Lizard?!" hisses the dragon. "Who is this oaf of an ogre that he dares speak to me? I am Jeratheon Knightsbane, son of Chargammon the Great! And if you dare speak again, I will bathe you in an acid so strong that even your bones will melt!"

"Who am I? I Grumblejack, slayer of lots of things. eater of even more things, and uh..." the ogre pauses as if grasping for an even more impressive title. Suddenly Grumblejack's eyes light up. "... Lord of All Ogres!"

Jeratheon looks dubious. "You? Lord of all ogres?"

"Yep, ask anyone. Grumblejack big high muckity-muck." From that moment forward Grumbljack always introduces himself to new people as Grumblejack, Lord of All Ogres.

Grumblejack's Revenge

At some point, the PCs are almost certainly going to fight Tiadora. If this happen and the handmaiden devil is defeated, at last Grumblejack gets to keep a promise. He smiles at the fallen, helpless devil.

"What did you call Grumblejack when we first met? Oh, yes ... you call Grumblejack a pet."

The ogre smiles a wicked, toothy grin.

"Grumblejack not pet. Grumblejack fearsome monster."

And without any more ceremony than that, Grumblejack bites the head off of TIadora. He tosses the handmaiden devil aside and chews her skull down to bonemeal in a few powerful crunches. The devil maiden withers, fades and soon only dust remains.

Grumblejack and the Altar of Asmodeus

Assuming, Grumblejack worships Asmodeus, by the time that Grumblejack encounters the Altar in the Agathium (see page 59 of Book Five), then the ogre is impressed by the unholy edifice.

As Grumblejack stares at the altar of Asmodeus, the ogre is clearly awed by its majesty. "Whoa..." is all the ogre manages.

For a time, the ogre simply stands back and does nothing. But if the PCs make sacrifices to Asmodeus, then the ogre becomes convinced he needs to make one too. He will ask the PCs to be allowed to pick out a fallen enemy he was particularly instrumental in defeating and to make that his own personal sacrifice of flesh and blood.

If Grumblejack is allowed to carry out such a sacrifice, he becomes infused with infernal power. The sacrifice transforms Grumblejack permanently. He is no longer a daemonic half-fiend. He is now a devilish half-fiend and his progeny will likely be the same.

His strength also increased by a +2 (this is an inherent bonus).

From that time forward, Grumblejack is no longer an unsophisticated worshipper of Asmodeus. He fully embraces the religion of the devil-god. He learns the rituals, rites and holy days of the First Tyrant. He can soon speak infernal. Though this sacrifice is his first, it will not be his last. From that point forward, all of his defeated foes are sacrificed to Asmodeus.

In game terms, this means that when Grumblejack advances a level, he puts a skill point into Knowledge (religion) and another into learning the infernal tongue.

Grumblejack's Empire

After the PCs become rulers of Matharyn and take over Talingarde, Grumblejack occupies one of the abandoned estates in the Golden Bow and makes it into his own personal ogre pleasure palace. If Karlotta Bonegrinder is still alive, she is there as well along with a small troupe of ogres who escaped the onslaught of the Battle of Brandelburn Fields (in Book Six, Act One).

For his part, the mayor of Matharyn (likely Hubert Rowan) recognizes that Grumblejack is clearly held in high esteem by the current rules of Talingarde (i.e. the PCs) and that the ogre could be phenomenally dangerous to the people. So, the Mayor has wagons of food and drink delivered to the estate frequently.

The result is that this estate becomes Grumblejack's dominion. The ogre does little but feast and frolic. Soon, Karlotta is pregnant and she gives birth to a great number of half-fiend ogre whelps who soon enough are tearing up the place. The other ogres are little better behaved, though Grumblejack is smart enough to see that their mayhem is largely confined to the estate's grounds.

Grumblejack is well pleased with his little empire and the place becomes a glorious wreck. Grumblejack will still help the PCs, of course, as they require it. If they need help with the minions or if they march to war, Grumblejack is only too happy to take his leave of this so-called "empire." If asked to help, he says this.

Grumblejack grunts at your request and for a moment seems to slip almost into a reverie. "Grumblejack miss our days of merry murder. Those days ... so much simpler. So, tell me, those days here again?"

Hopefully the PCs answer yes or something similar.

Grumblejack smiles a big toothy grin. "Then Grumblejack ready and march with friends all the way to hell and back. Besides, family life great..."

Grumblejack barely ducks enough at the last minute to dodge a plate thrown at his head by one of the countless ogre whelps that infest his estate.

"...But Grumblejack ready for break."

Quickly the ogre gathers his armor and weapons. Karlotta Bonegrinder gives Grumblejack an affectionate parting growl and tries one last time to knife her beloved. Grumblejack turns aside the blow easily and gives her a loving goodbye kiss.

Grumblejack marches out of the estate, ready to return to a life of adventure...

Grumblejack's Death Scene

If the PCs are going to get defeated at the Battle of Tamberlyn (see Book Six, Act Four), then almost certainly so is Grumblejack. Grumblejack follows them into battle and is likely part of their band when they face the overwhelming might of their foes. In fact, Grumblejack is specifically mentioned on page 88 of Book Four as the only one of their followers who will not abandon the PCs even in their moment of defeat.

The ogre is at their side when they encounter Antharia Regina, the solar and Bellinda herself. He charges foes far greater than himself fearlessly, ready to die in service to his dark masters. He is their last and most faithful minion, that rare combination of both competent and loyal servitor of evil. Thus, exactly where Grumblejack falls and against who depends on the flow of the battle and the choices the PCs make on who to engage and where they fight. But whenever that moment finally does come, then these are Grumblejack's last words...

Finally, even mighty Grumblejack succumbs to the onslaught of these myriad foes arrayed against you. The powerful devil-ogre, pierced in a dozen places, staggers and falls to his knees. He looks over towards the nearest of you and speaks, gasping for life even now.

"If not for you, then Grumblejack would have died in lonely prison cell and nobody know his name. Now, everybody know. And after I go, I will fall into the fire and be remade and I will rise ... Lord of all Ogres!"

And Grumblejack laughs one last time, loud and booming, before he falls at last defeated. The first ally you ever made has fallen. can you be anything but close behind him?

And thus Grumblejack dies.

When doing the Epilogue (page 89 of Book Six) be sure to include Grumblejack amongst the roll of how the PCs are remembered. After all, Grumblejack is very likely amongst the first NPCs that the PCs met way back in Book One. And he has been with the PCs all during the course of this adventure path. He should get a little mention during its closing.

Let the PC who had the closest relationship to the ogre describe Grumblejack's legacy. Is the ogre remembered? If so how? And were his last words true? Did Grumblejack become the Lord of all Ogres in the afterlife? Is there now a devil out there somewhere who was once an ogre and is it just possible that somewhere in the future, during the course of another more heroic campaign that the PCs might again face an all too familiar ogre-sized devil prone to boisterous laughter and big toothy grins?

Frosthamar

The Frosthamar is the northman trading vessel that in Book One transports the PCs and the weaponry from Thorn's manor to the Fire-Axe's camp and is the focal point of Act Three. Crewed by the greedy Captain Kargeld and his rough band of north men, it is a potentially memorable plot element of the first book. Unfortunately, it never received a map or any detailed description. This article seeks to remedy that oversight.

There is nothing elegant or comfortable about the Frosthamar. It has only two decks and the one below is completely filled with twenty four tons of cargo and provisions essential to the trip. It is so well packed, you could scarcely fit a copper piece into the hold, yet alone anything of any real size.

Thus the PCs must, like the crew, sleep and reside upon the upper deck. And on that open deck theer is no shelter either from sun or sea-spray, from snow or showers. The only respite is at night, when the sail is taken down and made into a crude cover that affords everyone at least a dry night's sleep. But it is close quarters with all the PCs and the nine crew sleeping tight together. The northmen snore like buzzsaws and the anchored ship still shifts and slaps against the coastal waves. Any PC who lakes a bed roll or blanket must sleep upon bare, wet deck planks and the crew have no spares. For those inexperienced with ship travel, it is likely misery. For even veteran sailors, it is still perhaps miserable as they are used to the comparatively comfortable vessels more common in Talingarde.

The ship provides fresh water and provisions, but the provender the north men carry is unlikely to be to the tastes of Talireans. They carry with them large quantities of dried cod treated with lye. They are constantly soaking the stuff in water to render it edible and the smell is pungent and inescapable aboard the boat. And when meals happen, the gelatinous fish (call lutefisk) is definitely an acquired taste. It is served with hard tack and carrots.

The only relief from this monotonous grub is when the captain orders that a fishing net be trawled behind the boat when the wind is strong enough to still maintain good speed. The fresh fish, grilled on a small wire grill with coals that are never allowed to flame, is easily the best food to be had on the boat.

Further compounding the problem is that Kargeld is not a welcoming host. The captain makes no allowances for his "guests" and treats them much the same as his cargo. His crew talk almost exclusively in Norspik, a language that the PCs likely do not speak, and do their level best to ignore these intruders aboard their boat.

Kargeld is gruff, rude and tactless. He hates explaining himself and is quick to resort to some variation of "because I'm the captain, that's why!" should disagreements arise. He also takes an grumbling about his boat or the conditions there on very personally, and holds grudges for the rest of the voyage.

Bonus Encounter: How Do You Like Her Now?

If any PC ever complains about the Frosthamar within earshot of Kargeld, he waits until they hit the icy waters at the entrance to the River Taiga. The captain then rapidly jars the boat at an opportune moment and cries out, too late, "Ice in the water! It'll rip out our hull!"

As it happens at that very moment the complainer was moving about on ship and must make a DC 18 Reflex save to not be hurled from the boat into the freezing icy water. Captain Kargeld is quick to cry out, "Get him out! He'll freeze in that icy water!"

But though the captain shouts this warning, he does nothing to rescue the person, claiming later if asked, "I had to keep hold of the rudder, you fool, or we'd flounder for sure." To rescue the man overboard, a rope must be thrown to the victim. This is a ranged touch attack to hit an AC 10 to get the rope near enough where the victim can grab it. There is plenty of rope on deck.

Once the victim grabs the rope, it takes a DC 12 Strength check to haul him in. If the victim is wearing heavy armor, modify this by +2. If the victim is large, modify this by +4. Every person who helps can add their strength modifier to the roll. But only one person actually makes a roll. Success means the victim is pulled to the boat. Failure means he remains in the freezing water. Failure by more than five, means he drifts farther away and now takes two successes to pull back to the boat.

Every round the victim spends in this freezing water, they take 1d6 cold damage. If the PC does not make a DC 13 Fortitude save each round such is the shock of this nearly freezing water, that they can do nothing except tread water and hold on to a rope. If they succeed at the Fortitude save and make a DC 12 swim check, they can swim back to the boat on their own.

Once back on the boat, the Captain has another sailor take the rudder and goes over to check out the victim. He takes this moment to whisper in his ear, "How do you like my boat now?" And then walks away with a wicked smile on his face. It takes a DC 20 Perception check for anyone else to hear this taunt.

If the PCs successfully survive this "mishap "with no casualties, award a CR 2 reward (600 XP)

FROSTHAMAR
5'

Gazetteer: Aldencross

In Book One, Act Four the town of Aldencross is mentioned extensively but never mapped nor described save in a single stat block. That stat block is reproduced here for convenience. There was originally a two pages write-up and a map that was intended to describe the town, but it was cut due to space. I believe that now to be a mistake. Leaving out Aldencross means that the PCs do not have sense of exactly where they are based and from where they strike out to burn Balentyne.

So, here then is a gazetteer of humble Aldencross, fully restored and expanded. It describes not only the town, but gives maps to the Lord's Dalliance Inn and shows the town's exact location relative to Balentyne. We also describe a few side quests that your band of villains can engage in during their time in town. Ultimately, the focus of the adventure should remain Balentyne and breaking the Watch Wall. This simply provides additional background material to add verisimilitude to your game.

Enjoy!

The Town of Aldencross

Aldencross is a township of necessity. It exists only because Balentyne exists. First, there was the dwarven bridge that spanned the nearby River Tyburn. That bridge was built in a time when a great dwarven kingdom spanned the entire island both north and south. That bridge was a critical lifeline connecting the dwarven realms, north and south.

In time, the dwarven realms faltered and disappeared but their sturdy bridge remained surviving through the centuries. When King Accarius IV called the Architect built the Watch Wall, this ancient bridge was an obvious place to build a fortress. The king considered destroying the bridge but decided against it. The bridge might be useful in the planned invasion of the Savage North (that invasion never materialized) and the mere existence of the bridge meant the bugbears had a known choke point they were likely to attack. And so the dwarven bridge became the death trap called Balentyne.

Balentyne was not far from a crossroads where the north-south old dwarven road met the newer Talirean road that ran parallel to Lake Tarik and the River Tyburn. At that crossroads, there was single inn called St. Alden's Cross, named for an obscure Talirean saint who protected travelers. That inn is long gone and in fact, its foundation is located at what is now the Town Hall. This inn was a small oft forgotten way station for traders and explorers and for many decades, that was all that was here.

Aldencross

LG small town
Corruption +0; **Crime** +0; **Economy** +2; **Law** +1; **Lore** +0; **Society** +2
Qualities pious, prosperous, strategic location
Danger -5

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government autocracy chosen by the monarchy in Matharyn
Population 1,800 (1,500 humans;150 dwarves; 50 halflings; 100 other)
Notable NPCs
Lord Thomas Havelyn, commander of Balentyne and Lord of Aldencross (LG male human aristocrat 2/ paladin 7)
Father Donnagin, priest of Mitra (LG male human cleric 6)
Tacitus of Morimun, magister (LN male human wizard 7)
Bellam Barhold, owner of the Lord's Dalliance (N male human expert 3)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 1,400 gp; **Purchase Limit** 7500 gp ; **Spellcasting** 3rd level divine, 4th level arcane
Minor Items 3d4 items**; Medium Items** 1d6 items; **Major Items** --

The construction of Balentyne changed everything. Suddenly, the inn had guaranteed business. Off duty soldiers need a place to drink and relax between guard shifts. The Lord-Commander of Balentyne built a home near the inn, as did some of his officers. And around that central nexus the town began to spring up. The closeness of this relationship is confirmed by the fact that the town of Aldencross has no mayor. The master of Aldencross is always the Lord-Commander of Balentyne.

Recently the town has gotten large enough (more than 1,800 people now call it home) that the Lord-Commander has seen fit to appoint a reeve. The reeve is the de facto day to day manager of the town and can approach the Lord-Commander with any needs the people may have. The current reeve is Dominik Vallison and he is described in more detail below (See Location 4).

Aldencross was never a walled community. Balentyne was the fortress and offered all the protection the town may need. It is also a soldier's town. Even though prostitution is illegal in Talingarde, Aldencross has more than its share of single women who seem always ready to have a soldier visit for "lunch".

This unseemly underbelly of the town does not change that fact that this is a Talirean township. Most of the people in town are good Mitran-fearing farmers and artisans. They grow the food and make the equipment that the soldiers at Balentyne need to keep the Kingdom of Talingarde safe. There is not a single family in town without a connection to the Watchtower. It is their sons who guard the Watch Wall. It is their daughters who marry those sons. It is there labor that feeds it, clothes and equips the soldiers and keeps the frontier safe. This is a point of immense pride to the people who make Aldencross their home.

Aldencross
1" = 100 yards
N
To Balentyne
Farmlands
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Environs

The town of Aldencross is located in the Borderlands region of Talingarde. It is a temperate clime, warm during the summer but bitterly cold during the winter and often receives heavy snow fall. The spring is wet and mists sometimes roll off the great lake, covering the town in thick fog. During the fall, the trees turn into a spectacle of color before shedding their leaves.

The land itself is hilly and forested up until you approach very near the river Tyburn itself, which is a great canyon that cuts through the rock and soil, making a massive scar that runs all the way from Estyllis on the east coast to Farholde on the west, nearly cutting Talingarde in half. Near the canyon the land is rocky, barren and slopes upward.

North and west of the town is the Lake Tarik, the great inland sea of Talingarde. Aldencross trades with a few small fishing villages and thus lake trout, amberscale and cold water crayfish are not rare on the dinner tables of the townsfolk. Crayfish in particular are prized, but in Lake Tarik they never grow to the gigantic size sometimes seen in Lake Scardynn nearer Farholde.

South of town are rolling farmlands broken up by scattered expanses of forest. It is these isolated farmsteads that largely feed both Balentyne and Aldencross. Wheat fields, apple orchards and vegetable patches fill the country side, as does pasture land for cattle and sheep. These farmers visit Aldencross to sell their wares and trade at its markets.

The forests are populated by all manner of game. Unlike in the heartlands, these forests are not owned and regulated by local lords. This means that even the commons can hunt for both fowl and deer. As a result, these animals are both often seen on the tables of Aldencross. Venison stew is probably the closest thing the town has to a local cuisine and it is eaten with great frequency.

All manner of forest birds such as warblers, shrikes, larks, winchats and nightjar are frequently seen. Hunters of course are more interested in the partridge, grouse, pheasants and ptarmigans. But most prized of all are the ducks that swim about Lake Tarik. They are skittish and fast fliers, and are thus difficult to catch but their meat is a prized delicacy.

The town surrounds some green rolling hills called by most 'the town green'. The town green is where the townsfolk meet and socialize. When the weather is good it is not uncommon to see townsfolk out and about on the greens, chatting about the seasons and sharing the local gossip.

What is the Purpose of Aldencross?

Aldencross is a town about to die.

When the PCs complete their mission, Aldencross will be laid to waste. Its buildings will be burned. Its population will be slaughtered. And those not wise enough to flee will die on the steel weapons of a bugbear horde the PCs helped arm and unleash.

So what is the point of this town within the campaign? This is not your typical fantasy town. This is not a place where the PCs can make their long term base of operations and slowly accomplish their many goals. This is instead a town with a violent destiny. But still it has a significant role to play in this campaign, four in fact.

First, Aldencross is a place for PCs to resupply and prepare themselves for dangers they must soon face in Balentyne. This is actually discussed in the adventure path (on page 52 of Book One). In a campaign that had so far seen the PCs constantly on the run, Aldencross is a place to pause and prepare for the challenges ahead.

Second, Aldencross is a location to impart information about Talingarde to the PCs. One of the most important and oft repeated rules of story-telling is show don't tell. Aldencross is a place to show without telling. It is one thing to say 'Talingarde is a peaceful place of law and goodness." It is another thing to show the people at peace, enjoying a good land of law and order.

In Aldencross they get to see that at work. They get to meet and mingle with the common folk of Talingarde for the first time in the adventure path. They can hear tales of the great deeds of the king, the beauty of the princess Bellinda, and the might of the Talingarde defenses. They can see justice fairly meted, Mitra worshipped and the House of Darius revered. These are important ideas that will form the core of the campaign that is to come. This information is made all the more poignant when the PCs come to realize that they will be responsible for shattering that fragile peace.

Third, Aldencross is a place that clever PCs can use as a tool to accomplish their goal of infiltrating Balentyne. There is useful information to be gleaned in the Lord's Dalliance inn. Important individuals can be lured to their doom without having to face them in the watch tower potentially surrounded by guards.

And fourth, Aldencross has a secret. The alchemist Teryth Caldwin is not what he seems (see 11 below for details). If the PCs can figure out what he is up to, they can discover his secret laboratory, which contains treasure and equipment that will doubtless serve them well in their wicked future adventures.

Town Features

There are twenty locations of note within the town of Aldencross.

1 Town Center

This is Aldencross' hub. It is where the King's Road turns and crosses with a fisherman's trail. The roads heads out of town west and runs all the way to Farholde. The road heads south before turning east and following the Tyburn river, travelling all the way to Estyllis and the sea. The northern road heads out of town to the lake and the eastern road travels only a mile before reaching Balentyne and the dwarven bridge.

In the center of town is a great statue of a knight on a horse. This is a statue of Markadian I called the Victor. The statue is unusual because such statues usually depict the Victor in armor, perhaps even charging into battle. Here the Victor is depicted out of his armor, in fine garb, riding his horse and looking dreamingly to the north. There is an inscription "Till all Talingarde is Free".

The town center is usually a large empty circle. However on market days, this town center fills with merchants' stalls. Having a stall in the town center (as opposed to the outlying greens) is a great privilege usually given only to well-established local merchants.

2 The Lord's Dalliance Inn

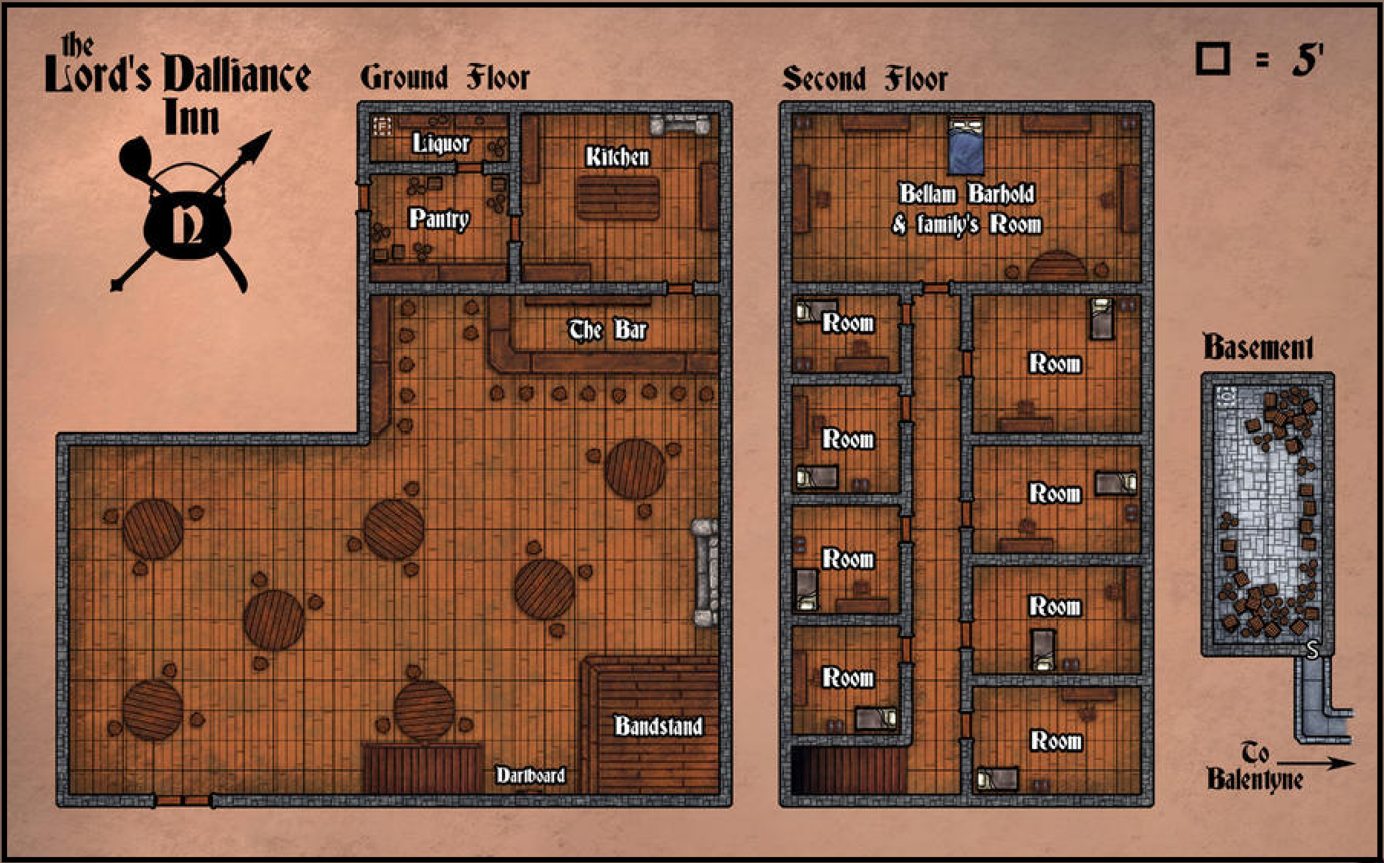
Aldencross' most famous (and infamous) inn is the only establishment that caters to travelers. On market days, it is impossible to get rooms here. Run by Bellam Barhold, the place is as much a town institution as it is regarded as a civic embarrassment.

The Lord's Dalliance was once a brothel. Everyone in town knows that. What many don't realize (or rather choose not realize) is that the Lord's Dalliance still does a fairly brisk trade in the world's oldest profession. In a border town with this many bored soldiers and visiting merchants, how could it not?

The local reeve mostly ignores these complaints, but equally rigorously clamps down if the trade expands anywhere but the Lord's Dalliance. Having one oasis of sin keeps the soldiery from getting restless. Having two could start to change the character of Aldencross and the reeve and most townsfolk certainly don't want that.

Once you can get past the more lascivious exploits of the Dalliance, the Inn is actually a comfortable place to stay. Bellam and his wife, Alicia, serve quality food and the rooms are clean and comfortable.

You can find more information about the Lord's Dalliance Inn in Book One, pg. 52-55.



3 Town Hall

This large building located right off the town center is built on the original foundation of the Alden's Cross Inn that was the first building in this town. This is well known.

What is less well known is that inn's old basement still exists. On the bottom floor of the town hall is a small chamber in the back (little more than a closet). The closet is currently filled with carefully stacked old furniture and bric-a-brac. If emptied, there is a hidden trap door in the floor (DC 25 Perception to locate). The trap door is neither locked nor trapped and leads into the basement. Mostly, the basement is also filled with junk.

However hidden down there (DC 20 Perception check to locate amongst the junk) is a case of whiskey that was stored in a small box that magically preserves anything stored inside. This three hundred year old whiskey of St. Alden's Mash is utterly unique and worth 100 gp a bottle to collectors in a larger city (Farholde or Ghastenhall for example). There are twelve bottles in the case.

Other than that, this town hall is little more than a large open area and a few offices used by the reeve for official business. There is nothing of value or interest there.

4 Vallison Manor

This large estate is the home of Dominik Vallison, village reeve and one of the wealthier merchants in town. He owns both the general store and the mill. Dominik himself is an educated man who went to Ghastenhall to be educated and then returned to run the family business. His time in Ghastenhall cultured Dominik and though he loves his home, he also appreciates that it is a borderlands backwater.

Dominik thus craves cultured company and if anyone noble or learned visits town, it is likely that Dominik will invite them to dinner at his manor. Dominik thus represents an opportunity. Dominik is an important man in Aldencross who is well known both in town and at the watchtower. As part of his duty as reeve, he is expected to report important events to the Lord Commander. Thus, Dominik is the only civilian in town who can go to the Watchtower, demand to enter and be granted more or less total access on the pretense of going to meet the Lord-Commander or doing the Lord-Commander's bidding.

Dominik is a handsome middle-aged dandy who always wears fine clothing and a masterwork rapier. Though he looks like a noble, he is in fact not. He is simply a very wealthy and well-connected man. However, for all of his airs, Dominik is still a loyal Talirean and worshipper of Mitra.

Dominik's manor is not a particularly secure place. It has good locks (DC 30) on all the doors and a couple of guards stationed at the door. Inside, if ransacked, there are 500 gp in easily portable treasure (silver candelabra, vases, Dominik's jewelry, etc.) and a 1000 gp more in valuables inside a safe in Dominik's study (DC 40 to open). So, the PCs can clean out the place. Of course, such blatant theft angers Dominik. He calls in help from small local townships and three days later twenty more men arrive in Aldencross, bunking at Dominik's manor.

Dominik will assume command over this new group of soldiers. His primary mission will be to restore order to Aldencross (assuming things have gone horribly wrong in town). But if there have been terrible deeds done in Balentyne and an attack is obviously eminent, he will come to Lord Havelyn's aid. These men will help defend Balentyne during the attack, so award -4 VP if they are not neutralized.

They could also replace loss soldiers or generally serve as a nuisance if things are going a little too smoothly for your PCs. Exactly where and when they show up is totally at Dominik's (and thus the GM's) discretion.

Dominik Vallison CR 4

XP 1,200
Male middle-aged human aristocrat 6
LG Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)
hp 33 (6d8+6)
Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee mwk rapier +9 (1d6+1/18-20)
dagger +8 (1d4+1/19-20)
Ranged dagger +8 (1d4+1/19-20)

TACTICS

During Combat Dominik avoids combat if possible, fleeing to warn the watchtower and fetch guards and troops. But, he is handy with a rapier and will defend his own life if attacked.

Morale Dominik is not a fanatic and surrenders against obviously superior forces or when reduced to 16 hp or less.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14
Base Atk +4; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 18
Feats Dodge, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)
Skills Bluff +8, Diplomacy +14, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nobility) +10, Perception +10, Ride +9, Sense Motive +10
Trait Fast Talker – Zack gains Bluff as a class skill and a +1 trait bonus to Bluff skill checks.
Gear *+1 mithral chain shirt*, masterwork rapier, 2 daggers, noble garb, jewelry worth 150 gp, 30 gp, keys to Vallison manor, *potion of cure medium wounds*

Dominik's Reinforcements (20) CR 1/2

XP 200 each (4,000 XP total)
hp 13 each (use the stats for Mott's men, Book One, pg 64)

5 The Giuseppe House

This is the humble cottage of Mama Louisa Giuseppe (see Book One, Act Four, Event Six: Bad Beef). The kindly old woman is both a town fixture and practically an institution. She is either here, at Balentyne feeding the soldiers, gossiping about town or in the nearby Church of St. Alden. She has a large flower garden in her back yard and supports herself selling these flowers during markets. However, thanks to the help of the church and the gratitude of the soldiers, she actually needs very little money to carry on.

She lives alone and has little of value.

6 The Church of St. Alden

This is Aldencross' local Mitra church. This small country church has been rebuilt only twenty years ago after a fire but is built on ancient foundations. The caretaker of the church, Brother Justin of Travismere is not a spellcaster. Instead, he is imply a humble devotee of Mitra (a LG male human expert 4) well-skilled at keeping the place in fine working order.

The real authority at this church is Father Donnagin (see page 66 of Book One), the chaplain of Balentyne. Brother Justin is frankly in awe of the man and defers to him on all matters of any real substance. Still, Father Donnagin is rarely at the church save on holy days. The duties of the watchtower simply keep him too busy.

The church has 250 gp worth of silver fixtures used in the various holy rituals. They are not at all secure and any thief worthy of the name could steal them. However, doing so would cause unimaginable shock and would cause the locals to organize a militia that would likely quickly get out of hand. Anyone who isn't a local would be in real danger of being accosted by a mob of 10-20 peasants wielding farm implements.

7 graveyard

This is the old town graveyard behind the Church of St. Alden. This graveyard is one of the oldest parts of the town and has graves dating from over three hundred years ago (when the first inn was founded). Of course, with such an old graveyard, there are rumors that the graveyard is haunted.

This rumor is untrue. Father Donnagin would have noticed any undead and dealt with them long ago. However, the graveyard is home to a fey named Giggling Jenny. Jenny is typical fey prankster, but is unique that she helps maintain the cemetery and church.

Giggling Jenny	CR4

XP 1,200
hp 18 (see Pathfinder Bestiary entry on Pixie)

It is not that Giggling Jenny reveres Mitra. It is that the caretaker, Brother Justin, puts out bacon and milk every few days. Jenny feasts on the treats and repays the lay priests kindness by doing minor bits of magical legerdemain to keep the place in fine shape.

8 The Mott House

This large residence is the house of Captain Franz Mott and his lovely young wife Kaitlynn (see Book One, Event Five: Kaitlynn's Tear for more details about the couple).

9 Town Market

This large sparse grove of tree is the location of the town market every quarter. The trees are not so dense that they don't allow stalls and tents to be set up and yet their overhanging branches provide shade during the hotter months and natural places to hang goods to display for sale.

These markets are the social centers of town and they are always attended by just about everyone. When the market is in town, this usually quiet picnic spot transforms in a bustling place of commerce. Farmers and merchants peddle their produce and products. Visiting tinkers and trash peddlers hawk all manner of wares. Snake oil salesmen make outrageous claims about their potions. And the smell of food stalls fills the whole area with the smell of roast chicken and toasted nuts.

During markets, the base value and purchase limit of Aldencross increase by 20%. One happens two weeks after the PCs arrive in town.

10 The Illuminated Scroll

A small farming village may not seems like a natural place for a sage and scribe to set up shop, and yet Mister Jacobian Scaramore (male middle-aged human wizard 3/ expert 3) manages to make a living here. He serves as the town's scribe, accountant, hedge mage and resident expert on matters of law. The truth of course is that Jacobian is a disgraced lawyer and hedge wizard from Matharyn. He was involved in a scandal involving a romantic relationship with a male priest of Mitra. While neither technically violated either the law or the ordinances of Mitra, it ruined both their careers and Jacobian moved to the Borderlands looking for work.

For our villains it is most likely that Jacobian's scrolls attract their attention. He has a small selection of 1st and 2nd level scrolls (1d10 first and 1d6 second, tailor them to your PCs needs). He also is a close personal friend of the wizard Tacitus in Balentyne (in fact, the reclusive wizard's only friend in town)and could be used as way to get at the wizard. Tacitus for example would certainly accept an invitation to dinner from his old friend.

11 Master Caldwin's Cauldron

This is the town alchemist shop. It carries a surprisingly large range of potions and alchemical concoction. The alchemist keeps a decent selection of potions in stock and can manufacture about anything else the PCs desire in a few days.

The owner of the shop, Teryth Caldwin, is a bookish fellow who has recently moved to town. Though a respected member of the community whose cures have proven very useful, he is also regarded as an odd bird and generally given a wide birth. The truth is that Teryth has a secret project he is working on, one that would shock the common citizenry if they knew about it. See the Secret Laboratory (location 20) below for details.

Teryth Caldwin — CR 6

XP 2,400
Male human alchemist 7
CN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +6; **Senses** Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex)
hp 56 (7d8+21)
Fort +9, **Ref** +10, **Will** +2; +4 vs. poison

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee dagger +5 (1d4 plus poison/x2)
Ranged dagger +7 (1d4 plus poison/x2)
Special Attacks bomb 11/day (4d6+4 fire, DC 17)

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 7th)
3rd—*gaseous form, heroism*
2nd—*aid, barkskin, cat's grace, invisibility*
1st—*bomber's eye, cure light wounds, disguise self, expeditious retreat, shield*

TACTICS

During Combat Dominik avoids combat if possible, fleeing to warn the watchtower and fetch guards and troops. But, he is handy with a rapier and will defend his own life if attacked.

Morale Dominik is not a fanatic and surrenders against obviously superior forces or when reduced to 16 hp or less.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 18, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 12
Base Atk +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 17
Feats Brew Potion, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Point-Blank Shot, Throw Anything, Toughness
Skills Appraise +10, Craft (alchemy) +14, Disable Device +12, Knowledge (engineering) +11, Knowledge (local) +8, Perception +9, Sleight of Hand +12, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +9, Survival +9
Languages Common, Celestial, Dwarven, Elven, Goblin
SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +7, identify potions), discoveries (acid bomb, enhance potion 4/day, latest dose, mutagen (+4/–2, +2 natural, 70 minutes), precise bombs [4 squares]), poison use, swift alchemy, swift poisoning
Gear 4 daggers coated in giant wasp poison, *potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of delay poison, potion of lesser restoration, potion of remove disease, alchemist's fire (2)*, giant wasp poison (4 doses), oil of taggit (2 doses), *+1 studded leather, cloak of resistance +1*, alchemist's kit, formula book [contains all prepared formulae as well as the following: *1st—comprehend languages, detect secret doors, endure elements, identify; 2nd—cure moderate wounds, delay poison*], 58 gp

12 VonKraig Smithy

This smithy specializes in supplying and maintaining the weapons and army of Balentyne. But Erasmus VonKraig, the master smith, also has a small stock of other weaponry and is always happy to take some side work if the PCs need armor or weapons. Erasmus is even accomplished enough of a blacksmith that he can make masterwork weapons and armor, though this requires a special order.

13 A stone watch tower

This small stone watchtower is manned by four soldiers at all times. There is, in the top of the tower, a large iron bell that can warn the citizenry in times of attack on the watchtower or in times of crisis. There is a simple code of bell strikes that can communicate whether the townsfolk need to evacuate or whether the townfolk instead need help from the watchtower. Learning this code is not too difficult as all the guards know it.

If the right signal were given at the proper moment when the watchtower was not under siege, then a Captain and twenty men would come from the watchtower to check out the call. This could be done to weaken the defenses of the tower (and thus be a source of Victory Points).

Dominik's Reinforcements (4) — CR 1/2

XP 200 each (800 XP total)
hp 13 each (use the stats for Mott's men, Book One, pg 64)

14 A general store

This is a small country general store run by the Morganstern family. It carries most normal equipment that adventurers would typically need (such as rope, tools, backpacks, etc.) What it does not carry is any sort of weapons or armor.

15 Timon Meadery

The forests near the town hold not only deer and fowl. They are also home to many colonies of bees. The honey is collected and brought to town where this local meadery flavors it with wild blackberries and makes a popular local beverage known as Timon's Black. This powerfully alcoholic sweet drink is so dark a purple that by candlelight it looks almost black and is a popular drink with locals and soldiery alike. This is where the mead is made and is the workplace of Falrick Timon, the owner and mead master of this place.

Mister Timon is a shrewd businessman and capable meadmaker, but he is not at all combatant nor a man of great personal honor. In fact, if threatened, he proves to be a coward, begging for his life and cooperating fully as long as it keeps him alive. This represents another opportunity for clever PCs.

If the meadery is visited, there is a plaque on the wall thanking Mister Timon for donating mead to the soldiers of Balentyne. In fact, this "charity" was no great deed of altruism. It was done to drum up business for his product amongst the soldiery. However, another donation would be at all suspicious and would be a way to get poison to the soldiery of Balentyne.

16 The Varning House

This sizeable residence is the home of Captain Ryan Varning, patrol captain of Balentyne. Because Captain Ryan is so often out on patrol and lives alone, this house is fairly reliably empty save for Captain Ryan's live-in man servant, James Darby (male human expert level 3).

Darby is utterly non-combatant, wearing no armor and carrying no weaponry and easily taken care of or replaced. This makes Varning's House (if he's been dealt with) a natural base for the PCs. Even better, the young noble captain is well known by his neighbors to keep odd hours when he's in town.

There is 500 gp in easily sellable finery and loose coinage about the house.

17 a farm house

This typical farm house happens to be where the Iverson family lives. Jasper and Edith Iverson are both servants who work in Balentyne. This older couple no longer has any children and so lives alone. They are thus the perfect couple to ambush and replace to infiltrate Balentyne. Their stats are on page 64 of Book One. Of course being commoner servants, they are largely noncombatant.

18 a small abandoned warehouse

This small warehouse is little more than forty by twenty feet open space. The building has been for rent for years and is now all boarded up. Tracking down the owner is not simple, but the reeve Dominik Vallison can help with this if visited at Town Hall (location 3). It turns out that the last legal owner has died. So, Mister Vallison will sell title to the place for a pittance of 500 gp if the buyer promises to fix it up and put the eye sore to good use.

Of course, little does Mister Vallison know that the abandoned warehouse already has a squatter. Teryth Caldwin broke in many months ago and used this as a staging point to deliver supplies and build his secret underground laboratory out in the woods. Now there is a permanent trail from the back of the warehouse through the woods to that location that can be found by a DC 25 Perception check or a DC 20 Survival (tracking) check. Master Caldwin will notice if this place is rented and start to take other routes to his lab. He will also take notice of the PCs themselves and may become a source of trouble.

19 Osterman Manor

This large and well-appointed manor house sits empty on the edge of town nearest Balentyne. It is easy to walk out the back porch into the woods and circle to the path up to Balentyne unseen. Of course, the approach to the watchtower itself is still guarded.

The house is large with a half dozen bedrooms. There is a large basement that is almost perfectly soundproof. There is plenty of space for multiple projects. There is even a high steeple (long ago this was a church) where you can see the watchtower on clear days. In short, this house is a perfect base of operations for the PCs.

It is currently owned by a Baron Osterman who no longer lives in Aldencross. However, the ownership is handled by the reeve Dominik Vallison (see location 3 and 4 above). Dominik would prefer to sell the place outright for the bargain price of 5,000 gp. But he will also rent it per month for 400 gp.

Renting the place is seen as somewhat suspicious unless the PCs can explain their presence. Why not just get rooms at the Lord's Dalliance? Buying the place on the other hand immediately makes the buyer a respected newcomber of obvious means. They are visited by Reeve Vallison, Brother Justin (see location 6) and Madam Guiseppe (location 5) who bakes them a cake.

Remember after all that Aldencross is a small town and everyone knows everyone. If the PCs seem to be settling here, they will have to meet the locals. This kind of direct involvement may (understandly) make the PCs nervous. Of course in the end, they have little to fear. The worse the risk is having local town busybodies gossip about them behind their back.

If they are rude to Brother Justin, in particular, or he notices anything strange, he will speak to Father Donnagin the next time he visits the church. Father Donnagin is a naturally curious fellow and particularly if the PCs arrival coincides with problems beginning at the Watchtower, then he will take interest in these new residents.

Father Donnagin and a couple of acolytes will pay the PCs a visit. This represents an opportunity to deal with the cleric, of course, but Father Donnagin's whereabouts will be known to Commander Havelyn, so if Father Donnagin goes into this house and mysteriously disappears, then there will be repercussions. Commander Havelyn may actually leave Balentyne and come down here in force (with all remaining captains and 40 men) to find out what has happened to Father Donnagin. The PCs could well find themselves in a great deal of trouble in such an eventuality.

20. The Secret Laboratory

The town alchemist Teryth Caldwin has a secret. Years ago, Master Caldwin was a professor at the True Ghaster University (see Book Three, pg. 87 for more information about this place of higher learning). However, Master Caldwin's researches tended towards the exotic. In particular he was interested in the construction of a golem made from human tissue. His goal was to take the bodies of fallen knights and create immortal guardians who could defend Talingarde.

Needless to say, many of his colleagues did not share his enthusiasm for desecrating graves. Though nothing was ever proven, Caldwin's late night ventures brought disgrace and scandal upon him and forced him to resign his position at the university and flee the city of Ghastenhall in disgrace. He has come to the borderlands to continue his research and prove once and for all that golems would make fine defenders of the watch wall.

Caldwin bought a shack ostensibly to store his reagents and had it extensively modified under the guise of building an alchemist's lab. What he has actually built is a golem construction laboratory. He has just finished years of work and has constructed a working flesh golem. He intends to wait until the next time the Watchtower has an emergency and to send the golem to aid the troops.

In order to make the golem he has violated the grave of Captain Jared Gauldenforth, the much beloved old soldier who served on the Watch Wall for almost fifty years. His golem bears Captain Gauldenforth's head and would horrify and terrify just about anyone in town who saw the creature. But Caldwin is completely blind to this reality and has convinced himself that the golem will be accepted if he can only present it at the right moment.

Of course, that hope is a naive pipe dream. All that Caldwin will earn from unleashing his golem to "aid" Balentyne is an angry lynchmob wielding torches and pitchforks. The fact that monster wears Gauldenforth's head will only add fuel to the fire.

For now, Master Caldwin waits, still hoping for his perfect moment. The beast roams his hidden laboratory restless and eager to emerge and see the world. It will likely be under that circumstance that the PCs will find the creature.

However, if the PCs do not discover this laboratory, there is another moment they could the meet Caldwin's Creature. The bugbear attack will be the moment that the alchemist has long sought. He will sent the creature to Balentyne with the vague order, "make safe the fortress from invaders." Invaders almost certainly means the PCs.

The laboratory is hidden beneath a non-descript shack in the woods. The shack itself is a simply two room affair with a rotten wooden porch on the only entrance. The main room is empty save for dust and cobwebs. A DC 20 Survival (tracking) check will reveal that there are faint footprints of a single human headed towards the backroom.

The backroom is cluttered with junk but hides a concealed trap door (DC 25 to find, DC 15 if the tracks have been located). That trap door leads down to a newly dug stone chamber. This chamber was made by a small company of dwarves who did the work and then left town. As a result, no one in town knows it's here. When the dwarves finished, the "wine cellar" was empty. But it is no longer.

Instead, it is cluttered with strange ap'aratus and surgical gear. There are also unguents and bindings worth 500 gp here that are essential in the creation of a flesh golem as well as the equivalent of a masterwork alchemist's laboratory.

But foremost here is the creation itself. The control that Caldwin has over his flawed creation is tenuous at best. Caldwin lacks access to the *limited wish* spell and has made due with more mundane (and completely ineffective) alternatives. As a result, the creature has only been restrained because it has not figured out how to climb out of the chamber.

So far it has obeyed its creator's commands (mostly). It has not smashed the equipment and it remains in the room. Still, it is not entirely obedient. It has ripped out of its restraints (it was once tied to the slab). Still 50% of the time it may be found lying on the slab looking much like a gigantic corpse (A DC 20 Perception check will reveal that the bonds have been ripped free and are no longer locked on its wrists and ankles).

The rest of the time it roams down here, investigating the lab. Any sort of fight is likely to make the creature go berserk as will open flames or the sight of its dead master (whether real or a disguise). Clever PCs could put this berserk rage to their advantage. If Caldwin's Creation is unleashed upon the town of Aldencross, it will do great damage with its rampage.

Troops from Balentyne will rush to stop it and ten of them will die valiantly in the effort. These losses cannot be replaced before the bugbear's attack. The creature will only be stopped when finally, the wizard Tacitus slows the creature with fire attacks. This allows Captain Barhold supported by Father Donnagin (who heals the fighter) to cut the monster to pieces with his magic great sword.

Of course right after that battle with Samuel Barhold at half hit points and Father Donnagin low on spells is a perfect time to attack the pair if the PCs don't mind a brazen attack. Regardless, such a rampage results in Teryth Caldwin getting lynched the very next day. How did the villagers know it was him? Teryth is proud of his creation and has branded his name on the creature's back.

Caldwin's Creation — CR 7

XP 3,200
Unique Flesh Golem
N Large construct
Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20; (–1 Dex, +12 natural, –1 size)
hp 79 (9d10+30)
Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3
DR 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee 2 slams +13 (2d8+5)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Special Attacks Poorly Bound Spirit

TACTICS

During Combat The Creation is no sophisticated combatant. It charges its foes and smashes them with its powerful fists. The only thing it will not smash is shrines and priests of Mitra. It stops there and spends a round staring in fascination before continuing its rampage against another target.

MoraleThe Creation is a fearless attacker and fights to the death once combat is engaged and it inevitably becomes enraged.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1
Base Atk +9; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 24
Languages none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poorly Bound Spirit(Ex) When a a normal flesh golem enters combat, there is a cumulative 1% chance each round that its elemental spirit breaks free and the golem goes berserk. However, Caldwin has made some crucial mistakes in his creation of this golem, and this one instead has a 10% cumulative chance of going berserk every round.

The uncontrolled golem goes on a rampage, attacking the nearest living creature or smashing some object smaller than itself if no creature is within reach, then moving on to spread more destruction. The golem's creator, if within 60 feet, can try to regain control by speaking firmly and persuasively to the golem, which requires a DC 21 Charisma check. It takes 1 minute of inactivity by the golem to reset the golem's berserk chance to 0%.

Immunity to Magic (Ex) A flesh golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A magical attack that deals cold or fire damage slows a flesh golem (as the slow spell) for 2d6 rounds (no save).

A magical attack that deals electricity damage breaks any slow effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for every 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points. A flesh golem gets no saving throw against attacks that deal electricity damage.

MinionQuest

What is MinionQuest?

On the next few pages are a series of three hopefully humorous but entirely optional interludes where instead of playing the villains, your players get a chance to play their incompetent but highly motivated and well-meaning underlings. These guys didn't make the cut to be real villains. Instead, these are the minions.

MinionQuest works fine as one shots. But what these adventures are really intended to do is provide you with three one-session comedic interludes to break up the non-stop serious tone of the "Way of the Wicked" Adventure Path. Because, let's face it, villainy can be a grim business. Inflicting bloody revenge on Talingarde doesn't necessarily provide a lot of laughs. The three MinionQuest adventures try to remedy that condition.

MinionQuest I happens during the events of Book Two in Farholde (the town near the Horn of Abaddon). MinionQuest II happens in the ruins of Daveryn in Book Four after the PCs have just finished sacking the Vale of Valtaerna and escaping Markadian's army. And MinionQuest III happens in the capital of Talingarde itself, Matharyn, during the PCs three-year reign in Book Six. They are all events that happen during the downtime that is built into the campaign. The adventures give your evil overlord player characters a chance to catch up with how the other half lives.

No doubt your villains have abused a few minions during their course of their wicked pursuits. Ever since the second book of Way of the Wicked, Call Forth Darkness, we've included very abstract rules for running your own evil organization. MinionQuest allows you to turn a microscope on that evil organization and see what it is actually doing day to day.

As the Game Master, there is one important thing to remember about MinionQuest. It's okay for minions to die. In fact, it's not just okay to have fatalities; it might even be the point. If a PC dies, they are not out of the adventure. Here we've provided you with eight pregenerated minions (see below). That's likely more than you need. The extras are intended to be replacements after casualties happen.

Further, eight may not be enough. Print out two or three copies of each pregenerated sheet. You'll notice the names for each pregen are generic (The Thug for example). This is not accidental. Encourage the PCs to name their own minions. And if two PCs get the same thug ... well, really, how different are thuggish minions anyway?

With sixteen minions, you may just have enough for the PCs to make it through a single session of the murderous mayhem that is MinionQuest. Just be sure that when a PC dies, you get the replacement in quickly. Nothing is less fun that sitting around completely uninvolved with the action that is unfolding.

So, you may be asking yourself, why do are your players going to need so many minions? The answer is simple. These hapless minions are being sent on unreasonable, suicidal missions by uncaring overlords who will not tolerate failure. As roughly level one characters (often with NPC classes), these minions get to take on creatures that punch WAY above their weight class.

In MinionQuest I they get to try and take down a werewolf (likely without silver weapons and certainly without being forewarned) and capture alive a particularly nasty hydra named Ripper (that's him on the cover) who eats minions for breakfast.

In MinionQuest II the PCs must traipse across a ruined city populated by monsters who don't like them very much, searching for a noble they have no chance of finding, while being man-handled by an ogre who only knows one thing ... he isn't going to take the blame for this screwed up mission. They get to enter a burning alchemist shop, fight a manticore and maybe stumble upon their quarry completely accidentally.

In MinionQuest III, the PCs must enter an incredibly dangerous trapped manor house in hopes of finding something that simply isn't there. And if they do happen to forge something convincing to save their own skin, it probably won't matter because the place is guarded by a stone golem they have little hope of hurting, yet alone defeating.

And if they fail, their dark overlords hold them personally responsible for what their masters insist are simple missions of urgent importance. Practice saying in your deepest, most ominious voice, "our organization does not tolerate failure" and "you have failed me for the last time." See how satisfying that is?

In fact, in the larger scheme of things, these missions don't matter one whit. Talingarde will not rise or fall because of what these minions accomplish. Maybe the minions can give their masters some small advantages or net them a useful item or two, but maybe not.

Likely this pack of minions are dying for absolutely nothing of any consequence. And that's the source of the comedy. If, as the minions fail spectacularly, your players are laughing uproariously at their perils and pratfalls, then you are running these adventures correctly.

Of course, what is truly glorious is if these wayward screw-ups occasionally (and perhaps even accidentally) succeed at some of these ludicrous missions. I've run MinionQuest I half a dozen times at various conventions. About half of the time, the PCs have actually managed to capture the hydra Ripper, a creature that on paper they should have no realistic chance to defeat. Of those times, two different groups concocted an almost identical plan that involved sheep and rectally-inserted poison. And the other one involved fast talking the ogre Grumblejack into fighting the beasty for you. And those mad plans miraculously worked.

What didn't work was the bold plan to lure the hydra out of its caves with a summer sausage tied to a stick or to sneak in at night and catch it sleeping because, hey, that must be when hydras sleep. And what definitely never ever succeeded and hopefully never will succeed is directly attacking Ripper. Doing the mission exactly as your evil overlords have ordered you - that is suicide. After all, the key to being a great minion is knowing when to obey your dark masters and knowing when to ignore those orders and resort to rectally poisoned sheep.

That is Minion Quest. And I hope you have half as much fun playing out these adventures as I've had running them.

The Perils of Comedy

"Dying is easy; comedy is hard." - E. Kean

Just like evil campaigns, comedy adventures are not for everyone. There is no shame in admitting that. It is often far easier to design a challenging battle than it is come up with even a single funny one-liner. If comedy were easy, the great comedians of the world would be out of work.

But humorous adventures are a lot of fun. And they are scarce on the ground. Very few have ever been published and of those, even fewer have been any good. Hopefully, you'll agree that MinionQuest is one of the good ones and you'll give it a shot.

If you are running "Way of the Wicked", you already have a group of players who are willing to try new things. MinionQuest is an opportunity to try yet another new thing. Funny adventures are never going to become the norm. But once in a while they can be a welcome diversion. So go in with an open mind and give it your best shot.

And remember, failure is always an option.

MinionQuest Pt. One
Failing in Farholde

Note: This interlude replaces the incident with Ezekiel Hawthorn on Week 14 of the PCs occupying the Horn of Abaddon (see page 64 of Book Two).

Ezekiel Hawthorn, a fiery street preacher in Farholde, is stirring up trouble. Day and night, he rails against the inactivity of the rulers of Farholde. He demands that the people rise up and storm the Horn of Abaddon that sits nearby to the town and now burns with unholy green flame. He is a troublemaker of the first order and he must be dealt with! But of course the lords of the Horn (i.e. the PCs) have far greater concerns on their mind that this trifling street preacher. So, they send in the minions!

Unfortunately for all involved, Ezekiel has a dark secret. He is afflicted with the curse of lycanthropy. Yes, dear Brother Hawthorn is a werewolf. Every night there is a full moon, his lovely assistant and fellow Mitran fanatic chain him up in a silver cage in the basement. But of course, no one amongst the villains or the orphans (the villains' secret organizations most likely name) know this. So, the minions are sent in wholly unprepared.

What a surprise.

Orders from On High

The minions are summoned to wherever the PCs usually talk to their minions in the Horn of Abaddon (the Lower Temple, 1-27 seems a natural choice). The PCs are all arrayed before their minions. Set the scene. Describe each PC as seen from the point of view of their underling. Emphasize how terrifying and powerful they are. And then read this:

"You stand now before your masters. Easily the most powerful people you have met, there is only one certainty. Opposing them is folly. You must obey. And through obedience no doubt they will reward you. Or at least, you hope they will. At last one of them speaks.

"'We have a chance for you to prove your worth to us. Within Farholde even now a street preacher, Ezekiel Hawthorn, speaks against us and urges the people to rise and raid the Horn of Abaddon. This must not happen! He must be silenced!'"

Another speaks at this point. "'This Mitra loving weasel is nothing! He must be slain and made an example! When he is dead then we will be troubled by his voice no longer.'"

Again another voice. "'No no no. If he is merely slain he will become a martyr. That will only prove the truth of his words. Instead, he must be discredited.'"

"'Bah! You waste time! Who cares what those worms believe? By the time they summon any courage we will be done with the ritual!'"

"'Do not speak of the ritual!'"

"'I mean...we'll be done with ... whatever we're doing here. Which is nothing really.'" They all pause from their debate and look suspiciously at you. There is a very long and nervous silence that goes on for entirely too long.

"'So,'" says the voice of one your masters finally. ""That then is your mission. Silence the street preacher in Farholde. Do not kill him. Instead, discredit him so that the people will not listen to him.'"

"'And do not leave him alive! Make an example of him!' Teach the people of Farholde what it means to fear..."

"'Secrecy is of course paramount."

"Yes, of course."

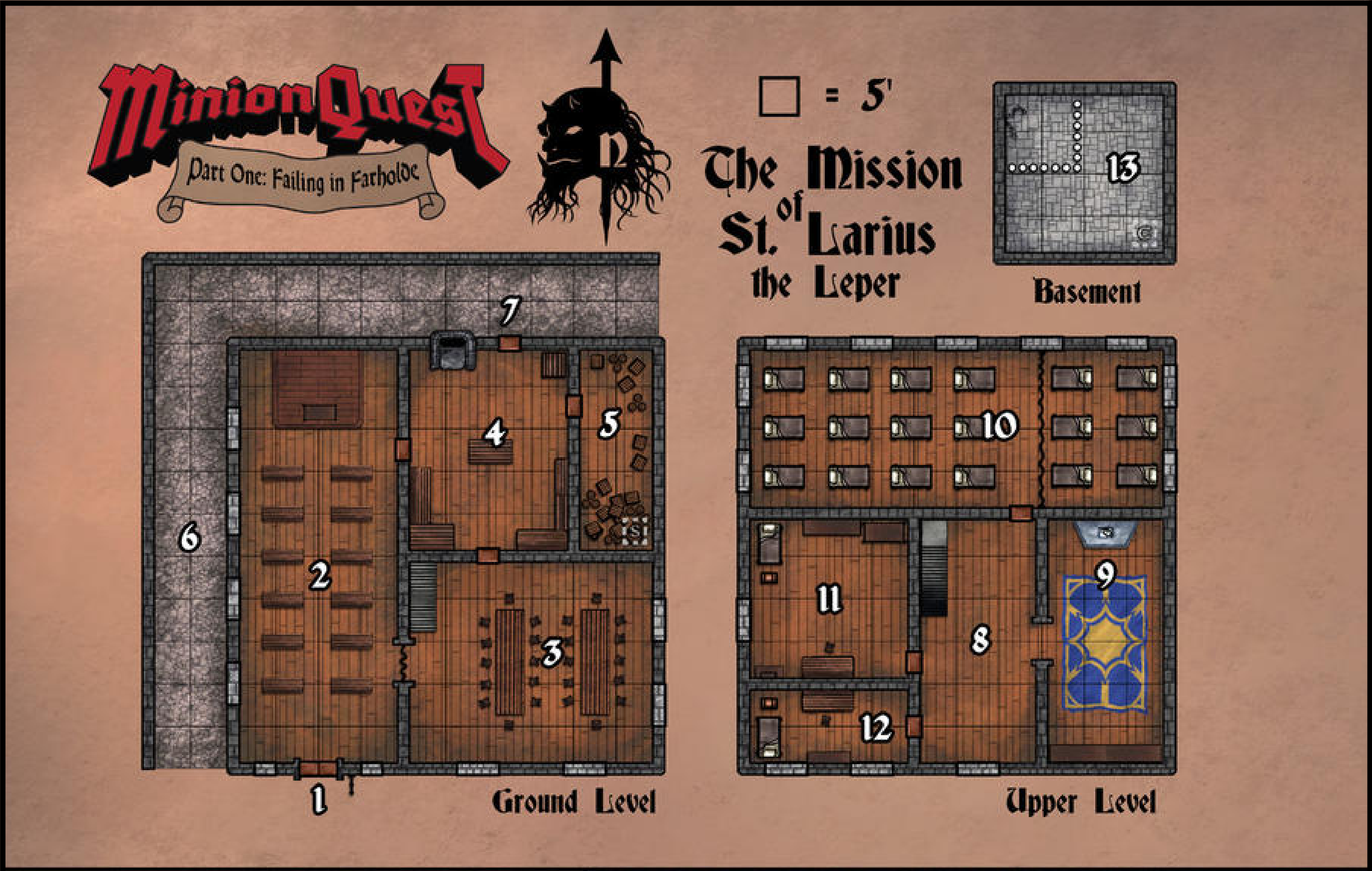
"'You have your orders! We give to you now some gold for equipment, bribes and so forth. Further, to ensure success, we have assigned our servant the ogre Grumblejack to aid you. You will find him at Lord Drownington's Manor in Farholde. Now go! And do not fail, my minions, lest we unleash upon ye the full measure of Hell's wrath!'"

The Joys of Tormenting a Player With His Own Character

This briefing should be given by the PCs. So you get a chance to (briefly) play the player's characters. More importantly, the PCs have a disagreement during the briefing. So you must pick one to be the violent, kill-them-all type and one to be the no-we-must-instead-discredit voice.

Of course the best part of the briefing is that you get a chance to parody and play up the PCs own quirks, habits and eccentricities. If you have a mad scientist alchemist who affects a German accent, one the voices should definitely speak like that. If you have an anti-paladin of Asmodeus who starts every other sentence with "By the nine hells..." then definitely include that.

This is your chance to shine a mirror on the players and show them what you think of their characters. It should all be in good fun of course but definitely feel free to ham it up. What is written above is only a framework. Play up threatening the minions. Take advantage of the PCs own powers and magic items. Customize it to truly make it a briefing to remember.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Part One: Failing in Fatholde
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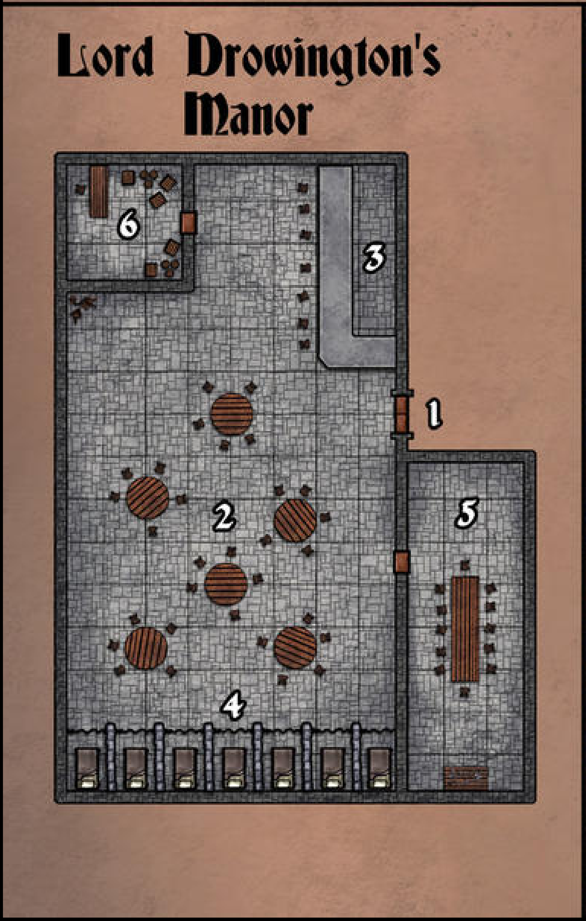
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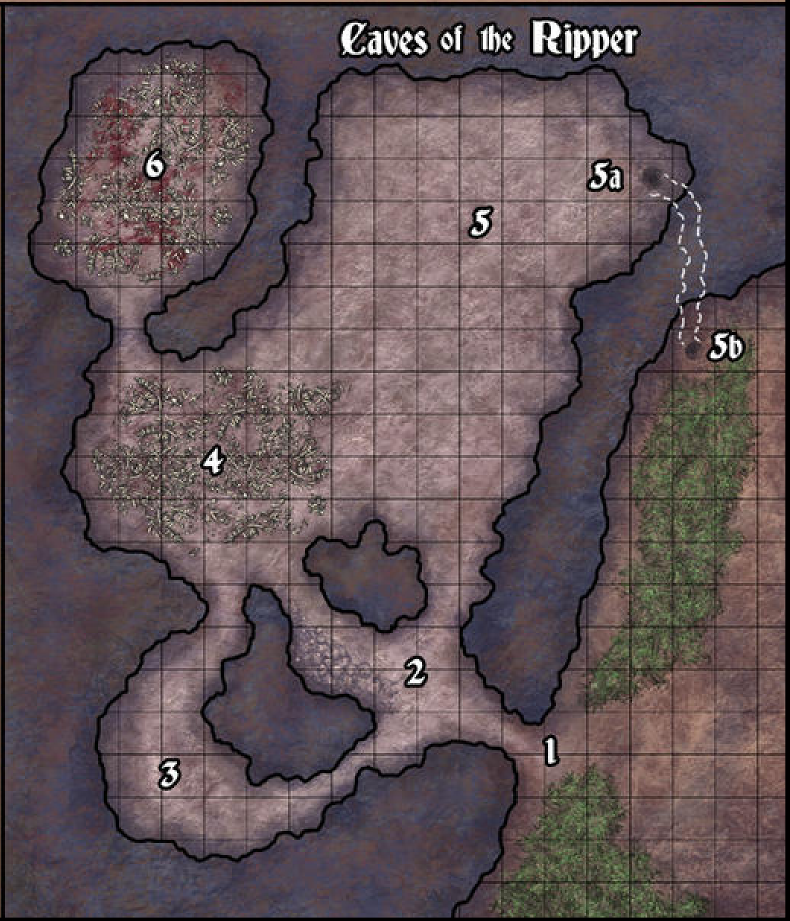
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Event One: The Tale of the Helpful Ogre

The minions are given 150 gp for this mission and provided with directions to Lord Drownington's Manor in the low-land portion of Farholde. The Manor is a rough bar in the bad part of town (there is map on the page before and a brief description in the Farholde gazetteer in Book Two, page 98).

Grumblejack knows he's being sent on a mission and has already been briefed about the street preacher. However, the ogre also knows these three facts: the Manor is a bar that will actually serve him liquor and that he enjoys; this mission does not really matter and if the mission fails the masters won't be blaming him; he also knows that if he wanders about Farholde in the open, he will likely get arrested again. If Grumblejack knows anything it's that he doesn't like prison. And so, Grumblejack has no intention of doing a blessed thing except stealing the minion's cash for drinking money.

It's possible that the ogre has only just discovered the place after being cooped up in the Horn for fourteen weeks (or more) serving guard duty. It is also possible that Grumblejack has been in town this whole time wrangling minions for other PC missions. Either way, whether the ogre is a regular or this is his first time at the Manor, Grumblejack loves the place.

There is reason for this attachment. Here the ogre is treated something like a celebrity. All the riffraff, thugs and lowlifes who frequent this squalid place have heard tales of ogres, but they've never actually met one. And Grumblejack is not just any ogre, he's a smart (and possibly fiendish) ogre who is full of stories about prison and bugbears and burning watch towers. In short, he's a barroom hit! He has already had several drinks bought for him and would like to buy a round for his new friends. And that takes money, which the ogre is actually short of (being a minion of evil doesn't pay particularly well).

So, as the PCs push back the crowd around the gregarious ogre, he immediately looks at them and bellows *"Hey! It's the Orphans! Grumblejack love Orphans!"* It is obvious that the ogre is more than a little drunk. He gives the first minion he can reach a big hug, and laughs heartily.

The wisest thing to do at this point is leave and to do the mission without the ogre's "help." That will allow the PCs to escape the Manor with all their gold and without getting into a bar fight. Of course, more likely is that the PCs will try to convince Grumblejack to leave with them. And this is a big mistake.

Grumblejack rises from his barstool and assures his new crowd of a dozen drunken admirers that he'll be back in one moment. He walks over to the closest thing the bar has to a quiet corner of the bar and asks the PCs:, suddenly very serious *"You here for mission?"*

The correct answer is "No, we were hoping just to have a drink" or something similar.

The ogre answers that with a big smile and, *"Good! You buy first round!"* and accosts them no more (a round costs 5 gp) assuming they leave him be.

If the PCs are foolish enough to answer 'Yes,' then Grumblejack narrows his eyes to slits. "Grumblejack getting information about preacher. Need money for bribes. You got money from boss?"

Again the correct answer is "No" or "Not on us". If that is a lie (and it almost certainly is), the PCs must make a Bluff skill check against Grumblejack's impressive +0 Sense Motive check (it's two lower than normal because the ogre is drunk). If the ogre buys the deception, he grunts and says *"You no help. Grumblejack going to ... uh, gather information. Grumblejack report back tomorrow. Yeah, tomorrow."* And he gets up and returns to the bar.

Anything resembling a "Yes" (to the question 'do you have any money') causes Grumblejack to demand the cash. *"This place dangerous. Thieves everywhere. Grumblejack hold it for safe-keeping,"*

Now, the PCs are in trouble. Grumblejack knows they are trying to drag him out of his new favorite bar and that the minions have the cash. Now the ogre has decided they are not his friends and he isn't going to leave them alone until they give the cash to him.

Clever PCs might try to give him just a little. Grumblejack will be sated with 50 gp or more. Less and he gets angry. *"Boss give you more than this! You try to steal from Grumblejack?"* At this point, Grumblejack will take a swing at a minion (not using his weapons or claws, if he has them, but just fists).

At some point if the PCs stick around, a bar fight is increasingly likely. Grumblejack's new friends are just as drunk as the ogre and eager for him to return to telling stories. If they see anyone try to attack Grumblejack or the ogre attacks the minions, then they join in. Working girls scream, bottles and tankards fly, and lots of little sub-fights break out. Thugs in this place do not attack the PCs in an organized fashion. Instead, some attack the PCs, some attack random other patrons, some keep drinking and others might even attack each other.

Roll 1d6 for each of Grumblejack's new friends (roll 12d6 all at once) and consult the following chart:

1 - 2	Attack the nearest PC!
3	Attack random other bar patron!
4	Keep Drinking!
5	Run for the Door!
6	Attack another "friend"!

As long as the PCs only use fists, this stays a bar fight. However, if any weapon gets used, the bar explodes. Weapons are drawn and things get deadly.

The proprietor Rubal Thrawn grabs the cash box and heads for his office. Eventually someone tries to knife Grumblejack (it happens 1d3 rounds after a PC uses a weapon, assuming the PCs don't do it earlier) and the ogre draws his greatsword. He starts hewing the nearest enemy to him (hopefully the PCs are clever enough to ensure this is not them). Soon Lord Drowington's Manor is a blood bath. Grumblejack flees Farholde, stealing a keg of beer and heads back to the Horn of Abaddon, leaving the minions with their mission and still no help.

Grumblejack, Drunken Ogre — CR 5

XP 2,400
Male half-fiend drunken ogre fighter 1
LE Large outsider (giant, native)
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24 (+9 armor, +6 natural, –1 size)
hp 48 (4d8+d10+25)
Fort +8, **Ref** -1, **Will** +3
Immune poison; resist acid, cold, electricity and fire 10; DR 5/magic
SR 17

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. base), fly 80 ft. (good)
Melee large greatsword power attack +7 (3d6+13) or 2 claws power attack +6 (1d6+12) and bite +8 (1d8+4) or punch +6 (1d4+7 nonlethal)
Ranged javelin +4 (1d8+6)
Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.
Spell-like Abilities (CL 5th)
3/day – *darkness*
1/day – *desecrate, unholy blight*

TACTICS

During Combat Grumblejack starts throwing one punch a round. He only resorts to weaponry if attacked with deadly weaponry.
Morale Grumblejack flees when he has 12 or less hit points left.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 10, **Con** 19, **Int** 12, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 12
Base Atk +4; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 18
Feats Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatsword)
Skills Climb +12, Intimidate +10, Perception +10, Survival +7
Languages Common, Giant
Gear large masterwork greatsword, large full plate

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, as a swift action, the half-fiend can smite good as the smite evil ability of a paladin of the same level as the half-fiend's Hit Dice, except affecting a good target. The smite persists until target is dead or the half-fiend rests.

Bar Locations

1. The Entrance

This is the shabby, unlabeled door into the bar.

2. The Main Room

The large open main part of the bar. All the furniture here is solid, durable and covered in knife-etched graffiti.

3. The Bar

This solid wood bar seperates the patrons of the bar from the bartender and the watered over-priced liquor.

4. The Privacy Cells

These small little cells have cots and are where the working girls "entertain" their clientel.

5. The Black Market

This would be a private meeting room in most inns and taverns, but here it is the hub of Farholde's black market. A few thieves trade in stolen merchandise, sell poison and other illegal goods here. They avoid bar fights.

6. Rubal Thrawn's Office/Bunker

This is where the proprietor, Rubal Thrawn, retreats if things get too dangerous. It has a heavy, solid, iron banded door with a superior lock (DC 40). The walls are thick stone. There is a safe in here that holds Thrawn's life saving (almost 2,000 gp). It takea a DC 40 to pick and only Thrawn knows the combination.

Grumblejack's New Friends (12) — CR 1/2

XP 200 each (2,400 XP total)
Human warrior 2
NE Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Perception -1

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +1 shield)
hp 16 (2d10+5)
Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** -1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee short sword +4 (1d6+2/19-20) or
dagger +4 (1d4+2/19-20) or
unarmed +4 (1d3+2 non-lethal or lethal)

TACTICS

During Combat They mostly stick to fists and non-lethal damage unless the PCs attack them with weapons first. However there is a 25% chance per round of combat, that one of them uses a dagger instead of fists. However, they only draw short swords if the PCs attack them with lethal weapons. That's as close as they lowlifes get to honor.
Morale The friends flee if reduced to half hit points or lower or half their number falls.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 11, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 9
Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14
Feats Improved Unarmed Strike, Toughness
Skills Climb +6, Profession (various) +4, Swim +6
Languages Common
Gear studded leather, short sword, dagger, 1d3 gp

Event Two: The Mission of St. Larius

Eventually, it is likely the PCs will give up on obtaining Grumblejack's "help" and actually decide to try the mission they were assigned without him. Their target and his base of operations are trivially easy to find. Almost everyone in town knows at least roughly its location and knows of the famous fiery street preacher who lives there.

The Mission of St. Larius is located in Estell in Farholde, northwest of the Vandermir Orphanage (location 5 on the map on page 99 of Book Two). It is yet another effort by the Mitran church to help the poorest and most downtrodden here in this small frontier town. It is the personal project of the fiery street preacher Ezekiel Hawthorn and he is rarely found anywhere else.

Ezekiel himself is a typical fire and brimstone Mitran, emphasizing the aspect of Mitra as the Fire Undying (see the article on Mitra in Book Three, pp. 92-99). He preaches a very conservative, orthodox version of Mitranism and personal believes that other gods are not worthy of reverence. It almost goes without saying that he hates Asmodeus and his followers with an unquenchable venom, but Ezekiel carries it a step further than most. Any god that distracts you from worshipping almighty Mitra is almost as bad.

Regardless of this vehemence, Ezekiel does carry a dark secret. Almost six months ago, Ezekiel ventured into the Caer Bryr to bring the word of Mitra to the savage Iraen. He was during that mission work attacked by a werewolf. Even though his underling and most devoted disciple, Sister Shera Rhaina, managed to save his life, he is now infected by the disease and turns into a werewolf on every full moon or whenever he is placed under too much stress.

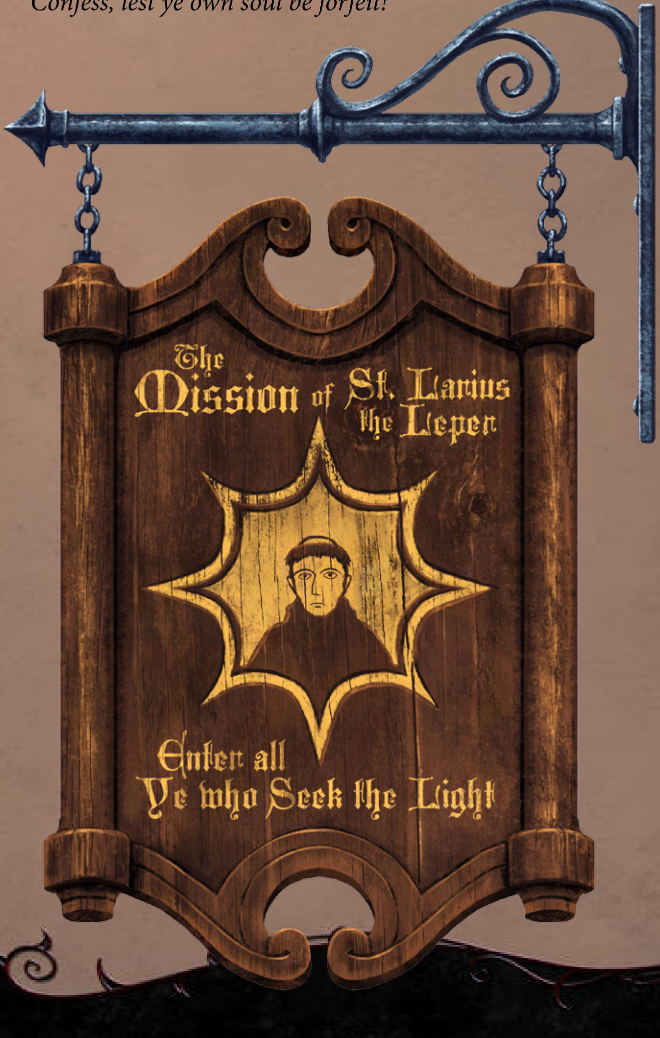
Sister Shera works tirelessly to find a cure for her mentor but so far has had no success. Instead, she has built for him a cage and silver shackles to contain Ezekiel when he changes. So far this method has worked and allowed Ezekiel to return to his preaching in this time of woe and wickedness here in Farholde. But she knows it is only a temporary solution. It is only a matter of time before the beast escapes and does something horrific. Sister Shera prays daily that Mitra will avert this tragedy.

In the meantime, the Mission continues its good work. Homeless people throughout Farholde are drawn here by the promise of a free meal and to hear the word of Mitra (but mostly the free meal). Ezekiel rails against the injustices of the rich and powerful almost daily in front of the mission and often draws large crowds. Baron Arkov Vandermir is a favorite target of his sermons, but no one is entirely safe from his rants.

There are only two permanent residents of the Mission. Only Sister Shera and Ezekiel himself live in the mission. There will also be 1d4 volunteers and 2d10 homeless or poor petitioners receiving aid, food and religious instruction here at any given time, but these transients come and go and are not interested in fighting (most are commoners level 1 or 2) and will flee from trouble. Note that only Sister Shera knows about Ezekiel's affliction and she will never reveal this secret for fear of undermining her mentor's good work and name.

Infiltrating or visiting the mission is no challenge at all. The doors are open to all. The minions can easily pretend to be devotees seeking the light of Mitra. This will earn them an earful of old-time, fire and brimstone Mitran dogma and a bowl of hot soup and hard bread afterword.

Ezekiel is absolutely insane. He's the sort of religious fanatic that most worshippers of Mitra wish would find another religion. He doesn't just yell at them about Mitra, he goes on and on about how the House of Darius has revealed its weakness by not continuing the Asmodean purges. *"They enemy is everywhere! Everywhere!,"* he rants. *"Why do you think the Horn now burns, eh? It is our own sin that fuel's the flame! Tell me, sinner, what hast thou done to anger the Almighty Mitra and fuel this fire! Confess, lest ye own soul be forfeit!"*



Mission Level One

1. Entranceway

This is the front door into the Mission it sports a large wooden sign (depicted on page 46). A Knowledge (religion) DC 15 recognizes the sign as showing a stylized version of St. Larius the Leper, patron saint of charity, forgiveness and the downtrodden. At night the door is locked (DC 20) and foot traffic on the road is not rare.

2. Chapel

This is the main chapel of the mission. It consists of rows of plain wooden pews, a raised wooden platform and a podium. Behind the podium is a mural of Mitra in its aspect as the Flame Undying. Like most religious artwork of Mitra, it has no face instead depicting an angel wreathed in flame casting down devils and wicked men with its fiery blade. Beneath the mural is a phrase written in celestial which reads *"I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who attempt to poison and destroy my brothers."*

This chapel is where Brother Ezekiel spends most of his days. At any time, 1d10 homeless or poor petioners are here receiving the word of Mitra, delivered with fiery vim by the fanatical street preacher. Here is a sample:

"Why do we face this trime of trials? Why has the Horn of Abaddon alit with green flame? Why do devils and monsters move amongst us? Can there be any doubt! Can we deny the truth any longer! These afflictions are lessons! They are the divine scourge of almight Mitra upon the face of this wicked land!

"Shall we ignore his call! Shall we stay asleep while our home burns around us! I say thee NAY! I say, brothers and sisters that it is time to marshal the armies of the faithful and take this battle to the gates of hell itself! WHO IS WITH ME?!"

This frothing rant is met by scattered clapping and a quiet, "Can we eat now?" from one of the homeless.

During these sermons, the beautiful Sister Shera is here hanging on Ezekiel's every word. She seems incredibly out of place here amongst these poor raggamuffins and the fiery street preacher who reigns over them. She is a vision of loveliness and purity. Sister Shera only pauses from her attention to show any visitors to a seat and quietly whispers, "Please be silent. Brother Ezekiel is testifying."

And then she returns to watching her mentor with rapt attention. Sister Shera, you see, is a true believer. She has embraced his teachings as a true path to Mitra and does all she can to see that he has all the aid she can provide.

Once, Ezekiel is finished with his rants, he steps down off the podium and invites the congregation to nurture itself. The homeless largely leave into the adjoining cafeteria (room 3) where they are fed by the volunteers working in the kitchen.

Brother Ezekiel himself approaches any new arrivals and addresses them directly. "Come ye, seeking the truth of Mitra?"

This may seem like the perfect opportunity to attack Brother Ezekiel, but it is actually the worst. Violence causes the volunteers in the cafeteria to flee out the back way screaming for the watch. Sister Shera rushes to Brother Ezekiel's defense. And very likely, Brother Ezekiel will soon "monster out" and turn into a werewolf (see Unleashing the Beast below).

In short, it is a recipe for a minion massacre.

Sister Shera Rhaina — **CR 5**

XP 1,600
Female human cleric 6
LG Medium Humanoid
Init +4; **Sense** Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (+7 armor, +2 shield)
hp 39 (6d8+12)
Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +8

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.
Melee mwk longsword +7 (1d8+2/19-20)
Special Attacks channel positive energy 6/day (DC 14, 3d6)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +9)
6/day – *Rebuke Death, Touch of Good*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 6th; concentration +9)
3rd – *bestow curse* (DC 16), *dispel magic, prayer, protection from evil*D
2nd – *align weapon (good only)*D, *bull's strength, hold person* (DC 15), *lesser restoration, remove paralysis*
1st – *bless, divine favor, magic circle against evil*D, *magic weapon, sanctuary*(DC 14)
0 (at will) – *detect magic, guidance, light, stabilize*
D domain spell; Domains Good, Healing

TACTICS

During Combat Sister Shera is a dangerous combatant in her own right. As a battle-sister of the Mitran faith, she prefers to hang back and use her spells. Still, if threatened directly, she has no problem drawing her sacred longsword and fighting for her faith.

Morale Sister Shera is a fanatic devotee of Brother Ezekiel and Mitra. She will fight to the death to defend her mention ahd her faith. However, she will try to summon the watch if she believes it the best way to punish the guilty.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 13
Base Atk +4, **CMB** +6, **CMD** 16
Feats Alertness, Extra Channel, Improved Initiative, Turn Undead
Skills Heal +12, Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +11, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +9
Languages Celestial, Common
Gear *+1 chainmail*, heavy steel shield, mwk longsword, silver holy symbol of Mitra, Mitran priesthood robes, bedroom key, 12 gp

What the PCs could accomplish here is delivering a sob story to Brother Ezekiel and earning a place to stay upstairs in the homeless shelter (Location 10 below). Ezekiel is not hard to convince that the minions need help unless they do something blatantly stupid like flaunt their 150 gp or a particularly valuable item. He wants to believe that people need both him and the word of Mitra so it takes merely a DC 5 Bluff check to gain a bed upstairs.

Talking to Brother Ezekiel up close and personal does reveal an odd affectation of his. Brother Ezekiel wears a gold holy symbol of Mitra. Sister Shera and most devotees of Mitra wear a silver holy symbol. A DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check reveals that gold symbols are usually an affectation of the very rich, but other than this single token Ezekiel wears peasant garb and a tattered street preacher's robe. It seems an odd combination.

Of course the real reason for the gold is not vanity or wealth. Silver makes Brother Ezekiel very uncomfortable and makes self control all the more difficult. In fact, Brother Ezekiel will not touch silver and turns way from any silver item offered to him. The gold holy symbol

Once accepted, Ezekiel says little to the newest recipients of Mitra's mercy. It actually falls to Sister Shera to tell them their duties and responsibilities.

"You may stay here for as long as you have need. However, to remain here you must obey the rules of the house. First, no drinking, gambling or immortality of any sort. Second, you will attend the daily celebration of the light. At dawn. Every day. No exceptions. And you must remain for Brother Ezekiel's edifying sermon to follow. Yes, all of it. Third, you must work four hours a day cleaning, cooking and so forth. The volunteers will have specifics. Fourth, Brother Ezekiel's private quarters and my private quarters are clearly marked. Please respect our privacy. Also, you seem fit enough to work, we will be trying to find you honest work for an honest wage using our contacts in the community. Mitra bless, brothers and sisters, and may the days ahead be brighter and more blessed than those behind you."

Flirting with the young and beautiful Sister Shera is perhaps the quickest way to get tossed out into the street. She is completely chaste and takes any innuendo that she may be otherwise as horrid slander.

Regardless, if the PCs can maintain the facade, being homeless vagabonds at the mission does have advantages. They can move around the place with impunity. Any location except for the Ezekiel and Sister Shera's private quarters and the secret basement cause no suspicion, especially if the PCs act like they're cleaning up the place.

The biggest disadvantage to maintaining the facade is that life here is austere and miserable. Monks would look at this place and, after a few days, beg for a break. Brother Ezekiel's sermons can go on for hours hammering home his repetitive lectures about sin and Mitra's light. Sister Shera is pleasant enough, but the other volunteers who oversee the PCs work are grumpy old church ladies who completely ignore the "only four hours of work a day". They interpret 'no immortality' as 'no fun of any sort'. Seriously. Smilng too much will get the minions scolded.

3. Cafeteria

This large open chamber is dominated by two sturdy tables and many chairs. This is where the needy take their meals and hot soup is always available to anyone who is polite to the kitchen staff.

Written all over the walls are various Mitran platitudes about the light and the virtue of hard work. About half could be taken as threatening to our junior evil minions. "Mitra knows the truth of your heart." "Only the wicked need fear Mitra's undying flame." "Let no one doubt that judgment cometh and that right soon." "Sinner! I know thee!" It's enough to put a junior cultist off their soup.

4. Kitchen

The kitchen is busy all day long. Between making soup, preparing meals, scrubbing pots and pans, and their essential but menial tasks, there is always someone here. Only when the sun goes down and the volunteers return to their homea, is this working kitchen left untended. There is a fireplace here where soup is always on a low boil. There are pantries full of dull, durable, peasant food. There are tables and crude cooking implements, but nothing of any real worth.

5. Pantry

This small room is full of foodstuffs and household supplies. There is only one small table here and it conceals a hidden trapdoor that leads to the lower level. It takes a DC 25 Perception check to find. Only Sister Shera and Brother Ezekiel know of this.

6. Alleyway

The alley way to the west of the mission inevitably has a bum or two who has just washed out of the Mission sitting here drinking besides a rubbish bin. Otherwise, there is nothing here of any value or interest.

7. Back Alleyway

This is an empty alley out back of the kitchen. During the day, deliveries of food and supplies donated by local businesses or bought from neighborhood merchants are not uncommon. At night, it is usually empty and always dark, making this a natural way to sneak into the mission.

Mission Level Two

8. Hallway

This large open chamber is the landing for the stairs that connect the Cafeteria (3) to upstairs. It also connects all the upper rooms together. During the day foot traffic here is not rare. The two western doors have signs. The northern door to the Shelter has no sign and seems somewhat damaged, not closing entirely all the way.

9. Private Chapel

Brother Ezekiel uses this chapel for more private consultations than can be done in the chapel (2) below. There is a brilliant colored rug in this room adorned with the Mitran sunburst. There is a compact altar decorated with a smaller than life-size statue of Mitra in all three of his aspects.

There is no door to this room, merely an open archway covered with a white curtain. It is fairly easy to convince Brother Ezekiel that a given person has something to confess and get him to take them to this room to hear their sins and pray for forgiveness.

10. Homeless Shelter

This large room has eighteen double bunk beds in it. A third of the double beds are separated from the rest by a sackcloth curtain. This is where the women sleep, with the curtain expected to provide a modicum of privacy.

The truth here is that there is no privacy. Twenty four hours a day there are people here and in most of those hours at least one of them is awake. There is no private bathroom, instead there are shared chamber pots that must be emptied twice a day (one of the very unpleasant duties PCs, being the new guys, are likely to be assigned.)

For all of the harping about moral purity in this place, it is not unusual at night to find a game of dice being played for copper pieces by candle light. Of course any sign of Brother Ezekiel or Sister Shera causes the game to evaporate.

11. Brother Ezekiel's Quarters

The door to this room sports a sign "Brother Ezekiel's Private Quarters. Keep out." There is a lock on the door, but it is old and easily picked (DC 15).

This is Brother Ezekiel's personal quarters and while fairly expansive it is quite spartan. The furniture is nondescript and simple and reveals a life seemingly without vice of any sort. There are the Brother's clothes, a writing desk and a small collection of books, all of them holy texts about the truth and practice of worshipping Mitra. There is a writing set as well and a few bottles of ink.

The locked chest holds the Mission treasury behind a good lock (DC 30). The treasury is somewhat bare these days holding a mere 145 gp in various coinage. There are also ledger books keeping track of the Mission's expenses and earning, but nothing here is out of place. Brother Ezekiel runs a ludicrously honest place of worship.

The most notable thing about this bedroom is how often that Brother Ezekiel is not in it at night. He clearly can be seen entering the Mission and not leaving. Yet on any night there is a full moon or that Brother Ezekiel has become too agitated he does not sleep here. Instead, Sister Shera and he wait until the kitchen staff is gone and go to the pantry downstairs to enter into the hidden basement (detailed below).

These late night treks have not gone entirely unnoticed by the homeless in the shelter (10). They theorize that the old man has "needs" (they'll never say excactly what they are) and that the beautiful Sister Shera is doubtless helping with those needs. Despite the lewd innuendo, this is essential correct. Sister Shera is chaining Brother Ezekiel inside a silver cage to keep him from hurting anyone. (See 13 below for details).

12. Sister Shera's Quarters

This room, much like Ezekiels has a sign that reads "Sister Shera's Private Quarters. Keep out." There is a lock on the door, but it is old and easily picked (DC 15). Inside, is a spartan room that serves as the personal quarters of Sister Shera. There is little more than a bed, a small chest filled with plain clothes and a desk and a chair here.

On the desk is a well-used Mitran prayer book and holy text entitled "Journeys into Light". But in an unlocked drawer is a newer book entitled "Being the Complete and Entire Truth about Lycanthropy". Though written in a pseudo-scholarly tone, this book is actually a work of sensationalism with little real information. Still, it consistently adopts a stilted formal tone, all the while claiming that "At last and verily, a tome that dareth to telleth thee the truth likest it is."

Sister Shera is here almost every night, reading, praying or sleeping. Hers is an austere life, and though she is slightly more quiet about it, she is every bit the fanatic that Brother Ezekiel is. She has dedicated her life to Mitra, to Brother Ezekiel's teachings and to curing his "infernal affliction". Despite consistent rumors, Sister Shera and Brother Ezekiel are not romantically involved. In fact, both are both chaste (something the Mitran faith does not require by the way) and their relationship is closer to a father to a daughter, albeit a crazed father filling his daughter's head with dogma about devils being everywhere and the need for more purges against Asmodeus.

One recent change, Sister Shera used to not wear her armor everywhere she goes. But recently, she has listening to Brother Ezekiels endless sermons about Storming the Horn and now, she is ready at all times to join the battle against evil. Only at night, to sleep, is she out of her armor.

Mission Basement

13. The Beast's Cage

This empty subterranean chamber has only one noteworthy feature, the cage where Brother Ezekiel spends every full moon. The bars are heavy, stout steel coated in silver. The lock is crude (DC 20 to pick) but stout and strong (DC 25 to break). There are deep gouges in the stone floor inside the cell as if some great beast had been clawing at the stone.

Brother Ezekiel Hawthorn, Human Form CR 7

XP 3,200
Male Middle-aged Human Cleric of Mitra (the Fire Undying) 7
LG Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger)
Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10
hp 56 (7d8+21)
Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +12
Resist fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee unarmed +6 (1d3+1 nonlethal)
Special Attacks channel positive energy 7/day (DC 17, 4d6)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +12)
8/day—fire bolt (1d6+3), touch of good

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +12)
4th—*dismissal, holy smite* (DC 19), *wall of fire*[D]
3rd—*dispel magic, fire ball*[D] (DC 18), *invisibility purge, remove blindness/deafness*
2nd—*align weapon (good), hold person* (DC 17), *produce flame*[D], *spiritual weapon, zone of truth*
1st—*bless, burning hands*[D], *cause fear* (DC 16), *command* (DC 16), *detect evil, protection from evil, shield of faith*
0th (at will)—*detect magic, guidance, light, stabilize*

D Domain spell; Domains Fire, Good

TACTICS

During Combat Combat is too stressful for Brother Ezekiel to remain in this form for long. He immediately reverts to his werewolf form.

Morale Brother Ezekiel is a fanatic's fanatic. If he is fighting Asmodeans, he fights to the death!

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 11, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 14
Base Atk +5; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 18
Feats Extra Channel, Improved Channel, Iron Will, Selective Channeling, Toughness
Skills Diplomacy +12 (+14 when inciting crowds to follow Mitra), Knowledge (religion) +10, Sense Motive +15
Languages Common
Trait Street Preacher - +2 to Diplomacy when inciting crowds to follow Mitra
SQ aura, change shape (human, hybrid, and wolf; polymorph), lycanthropic empathy (wolves and dire wolves)
Gear robe, sandals, gold holy symbol (worth 150 gp)

Of course the great beast is Ezekiel himself and if the PCs come at night, it happens to be the full moon and Ezekiel is here in masterwork silver manacles (worth 70 gp) in his snarling bestial form. Also here during those times is Sister Shera, on her knees reading to the beast from a Mitran holy text, keeping vigil to her afflicted mentor even as he tries to tear her throat out. If Sister Shera is harmed, the werewolf Ezekiel gains an inhuman burst of strength and automatically breaks his bonds.

Brother Ezekiel Hawthorn, Werewolf Form CR 7

XP 3,200
Male Middle-aged Human Cleric of Mitra (the Fire Undying) 7
CE Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger)
Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)
hp 63 (7d8+28)
Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +12
Resist fire 10; **DR** 10/silver

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.
Melee 2 claws +10 (1d8+5), bite +10 (1d6+5 plus trip)

TACTICS

During Combat When Brother Ezekiel transforms into a werewolf, his mind leaves and he is replaced by a brutal, merciless savage beast. Perhaps everyone in a while a glimmer of his old self shines through (particularly he will not attack Sister Shera). But mostly he is an out of control savage attacking everyone and anyone. His great strength makes him difficult to control or cage and he attacks with an unrelenting fury.

Morale The frenzied beast fights to the death!

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 12, **Con** 15, **Int** 11, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 14
Base Atk +5; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 19
Feats Extra Channel, Improved Channel, Iron Will, Selective Channeling, Toughness
Skills Diplomacy +12 (+14 when inciting crowds to follow Mitra), Knowledge (religion) +10, Sense Motive +15
Languages Can't Speak
Trait Street Preacher - +2 to Diplomacy when inciting crowds to follow Mitra
SQ aura, change shape (human, hybrid, and wolf; *polymorph*), lycanthropic empathy (wolves and dire wolves)
Gear robe, sandals, gold holy symbol (worth 150 gp)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Change Shape (Su) All lycanthropes have three forms—a humanoid form, an animal form, and a hybrid form. Equipment does not meld with the new form between humanoid and hybrid form, but does between those forms and animal form. Ezekiel's variety of lycanthropy causes to him change whenever he is under great stress or during full moons. He reverts to its humanoid form automatically with the next sunrise, or after 8 hours of rest, whichever comes first. A slain lycanthrope reverts to its humanoid form, although it remains dead.

Lycanthropic Empathy (Ex) In any form, natural lycanthropes can communicate and empathize with animals related to their animal form. They can use Diplomacy to alter such an animal's attitude, and when so doing gain a +4 racial bonus on the check. Afflicted lycanthropes only gain this ability in animal or hybrid form.

Trip (Ex) A werewolf in hybrid form can attempt to trip its opponent as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity if it hits with its bite attack. If the attempt fails, the werewolf is not tripped in return.

Unleashing the Beast

At some point, the minions are almost certain to try and attack Ezekiel Hawthorn. This is, of course, likely a great mistake for their prolonged well-being, especially if they do so without realizing what they are going to have to face.

He must seem an easy target. Ezekiel Hawthorn is commonly found unarmored and unarmed, wearing only a robe and his golden holy symbol. He is an older man on the very edge of old age. What could be simple than simply murdering him in the streets?

Of course, this attack goes horribly wrong as the werewolf emerges. The pregenerated characters have no silver weaponry and scarce resources to acquire any (save for a few relatively inexpensive silver arrows). As a result, they are barely able to hurt the werewolf at all and even if they do, he will shortly recover from those injuries.

It does not matter how the PCs come at Ezekiel. Attacking Ezekiel is too much stress upon the barely contained rage of the lycanthrope. He immediately and uncontrollably turns into his bestial form and begins rampaging, attacking anyone he meets. The only person he won't attack is Sister Shera. He will pause, roar at her, and seem for a moment to recognize his most faithful acolyte. Then he continues his rampage elsewhere. Even revealing a holy symbol of Asmodeus is likely to set off this religious fanatic and cause his transformation. Knowing that the agents of the Adversary are after him and in his midst is very stressful indeed.

This battle is a fantastically dangerous of course. The werewolf is a monster in hand to hand combat. But, clever minions may realize that this is actually their best opportunity to both slay and humiliate the street preacher in one stroke. How can this be done?

A werewolf rampaging through the streets will inevitably attract the town watch of Farholde. They too at first will be ill equipped to deal with a werewolf and outmatched. Doubtless they suffer losses trying to take the beast down. But eventually Sir Valin Darian and some of his knights, armed with silver weaponry, will corner the beast and take down the vicious lycanthrope, doing this for the good of the town they have sworn protect.

This will actually successfully accomplish the PCs contradictory mission. Ezekiel will be dead and discredited and not by the PCs' hand (they didn't kill him). All the PCs have to do is poke the hornet's nest that is this werewolf and then flee somehow escaping his relentless fury.

Should be simple.

Clever PCs may realize that the best way to enrage the werewolf (once they learn his true nature) is to do it at range. The PCs could simply hide in a nearby building and shoot Ezekiel with an arrow or spell. A single arrow wound he can recover from (with a DC 20 Will save) and be able to keep his composure as he takes cover.

An even better target to enrage Ezekiel is Sister Shera. In fact, truth told, she might work a little too well. Attacking his beloved acolyte immediately causes him to "monster out" (no will save) and go on a rampage protecting her instinctively. If the arrow shot into her is silver (those cost 2 gp and 5 cp each) ensuring Ezekiel burns himself when he tries to pluck it out, all the better.

The PCs may also try to attack Brother Ezekiel in his cell. This is actually not a good plan. Sister Shera will be there and will try to defend her mentor. As soon as she is attacked, the enraged werewolf breaks free and again our minions face the beast in hand to hand combat. It should be a brutal affair.

Foolish minions may try to stand their ground against the beast. They will not last long. Cleverer minions will run. If the minions split up, determine randomly which minion the beast decides to hunt. Of course there is still enough of Ezekiel inside the beast that he preferentially targets any minion who has an unholy symbol of Asmodeus displayed. Some nights its not good to be the cultist.

This battle can easily turn into a chase on the streets of Farholde. Be ready to improvise based on the PCs actions. Random bystanders who see the beast scream and flee. A snarling werewolf attracts the town watch within 1d4 minutes. The question is whether our band of minions can last that long.

There is a good chance that when Ezekiel transforms, the minions will be caught completely off guard by this. This is understandable. The hints that Ezekiel are afflicted are either very subtle (he refuses to wear silver) or require access to resistricted areas (the book in Sister Shera's quarters). In playtesting, the effect of this surprise has often been remarkable. Players jaws literally drop. If you get this reaction, you've done your job.

However, the beast is unleashed make it memorable and err towards the awesome. This is the climax of the first half of the adventure. Make it count!

Regardless of how things turn out, likely after Ezekiel reveals himself (one way or another), the minions are finished with this portion of the mission. It is time to report back to the masters.

This should go well.

Event Three: Ripper!

With the street preacher Ezekiel Hawthorn taken care of one way or another, the PCs have only to report back and receive their reward for a job well done. More likely, they face the unenviable task of explaining how they completely screwed up the mission. But succeed or fail, our dark overlords are not done with them yet.

"Fools! Idiot! Morons! We give you the simplest of task and what do I hear back? Werewolves rampaging through the streets of Farholde even as our efforts in the Horn are at their most delicate juncture! No doubt your buffoonery will draw yet more adventurers to our doorstep. I should have you flayed for this failure!"

Another dark master clears their throat. "Wait...I have a better use for these minions. Our scouts have located a potentially useful creature in the nearby Salt Brack. There is a hydra there of uniquely unpleasant temperament. The local boggards call the beast 'Ripper' in their tongue. This creature would make a potent guard for the Horn and would keep adventurers at bay while we complete our ... well, it's of no import to the likes of you!"

"You will go to Ripper's cave. You will capture the creature alive. Bind it in a wagon we will provide you and bring it back here to the Horn! Do this and we may reward you! FAIL..."

The master's eyes narrow to slits. You can tell that even now they ruminate upon what horrors they will inflict upon you if you disappoint them.

"...Do not fail," says a voice as poisonous as an adder's strike.

"Fear not, my minions," come another more soothing voice. "You will have help. We will again send Grumblejack with you to aid you in this endeavor. No doubt he will be your greatest asset."

"Now go! And come back with Ripper or don't come back at all!"

And so the PCs are sent on their way with a wagon, one draft horse and some rope. They are provided with actually fairly precise directions to Ripper's lair as well. Waiting with the gear with a big smile on his face is Grumblejack.

The big ogre is quick to speak. "Grumblejack is team leader, right?"

Anyone who contradicts the ogre gets clocked and the ogre asks once more. "Grumblejack team leader?"

Once the PCs have agreed to this (or started a fight against a half-fiendish ogre they almost certainly can't win), then Grumblejack explains his brilliant plan.

"Good! We go to cave. Me guard wagon. You get hydra. We home by dinner!"

Of course, this is the stupidest possible plan from the PC's point of view. Going into the cave and trying to fight Ripper is almost certainly suicide. The CR 7 stealthy six-headed ultra-wary death beast is not something our poor minions have any real chance against.

If the PCs don't recognize this, let Grumblejack bully them into going to the cave. He sends them and waits by the wagon for them to get murdered. After the PCs have all been ripped to shreds (or do a few survivors actually manage to flee?), Grumblejack goes back to the Horn.

A new group of minions (including any survivors) receives more or less the same brief they got the first time and are sent on the same suicidal mission. Clever PCs may avoid the cycle of murder altogether. Less clever may need a good butchering to get the point. Direct combat against the hydra is folly!

So, what should the PCs do? The first challenge they must face is Grumblejack himself. They should convince Grumblejack that simply going to the cave is stupid. Grumblejack is clever for any ogre, but that's still not very clever. Insulting the ogre or telling him that his plan is stupid, gets the PCs once more unceremoniously punched by the ogre.

Instead, Grumblejack is very susceptible to bribery or flattery. What he really wants to do is skip out on this mission entirely and go back to the bar in Farholde (Lord Drowington's Manor) preferably with all the PC's money. What Grumblejack doesn't want to do is go personally fight the hydra. That thing is dangerous!

Still, Grumblejack is a proud half-daemon ogre. He could be goaded into battle by a clever and manipulative party. Grumblejack with his damage reduction and mighty blows with his greatsword can almost certainly knock out Ripper (especially if he has help).

In general, Grumblejack is fairly easily fast-talked into whatever scheme the PCs can come up with. As long as the PCs always address Grumblejack as the team leader and butter him up with compliments, the ogre can fooled into doing anything they want. However, persuading him to fight the hydra requires a DC 20 bluff check. Award a +4 modifier for employing some variation of "Surely, the mighty Grumblejack isn't afraid of a puny little hydra?"

The Cave of Ripper

1 Entrance

This is a small muddy cavernous entry into the side of a swampy hill where dwells the monstrous hydra commonly called the Ripper. This entrance is itself fairly nondescript. The only thing that is obviously amiss here (requiring no Perception rolls of any kind) is that something much bigger than a man has been slithering into and out of this cave. Whatever it is, it has made no attempts to cover it tracks. After all, what does the Ripper have to fear?

Perhaps Grumblejack the Ogre is sitting here with his wagon. If so, he points inside the cave and expresses his orders to his so-called underlings. "Get 'em," he grunts. That is the extent of the ogre's plan. That, and not going in the cave, of course. Grumblejack is no fool.

2 The Parlor

This open stretch of cave is dark and damp. The rough patch against the wall is a series of natural formations (stalagmites and stalactites) that make that area difficult terrain. Otherwise it is empty and there is nothing of danger of value here.

Any character in this area may make a DC 10 Perception check. If successful, they catch the unmistakable odor of rotting meat. This order is coming from area 4 below.

3 The Ambush Site

This small cavern is completely dark and sometimes empty. However, this cavern is Ripper usually hangs out if he has smelled any prey near his lair (and his acute sense of smell can detect preferred prey like horses for hundred yards).

He lurks here, waiting, using his formidable +17 Stealth (modified down to a +9 thanks to his huge size), almost impossibly still. His blind sense means he needs no light or even warmth to see. He is cautious and more than a little curious at first. It is rare for prey to enter his lair of their own accord. He waits patiently for his victims to blunder around in the dark, searching for him. When at last he is ready then he strikes, deadly and lightning fast.

Needless to say, with an average damage output of 45 points of damage a round (assuming he hits), he is likely to rip our poor minions into itty bitty meaty chunks in fairly short order. The one advantage that the PCs have is that Ripper is slow over long distances. Still with his 10 feet reach and pounce ability, this is unlikely to matter in the confines of the cave.

4 The Killing Field

This is where Ripper prefers to eat. He drags his caught prey here and devours it. As a result, the floor of this portion of the cavern is covered with bones of countless kinds of animals. If anyone cares to stop and look, there are alligator bones, lizard bones, horse bones, cow bones, goat bones and yes a wide selection of humanoid bones of various descriptions and races.

The stench here is intense. The sickly sweet smell of decay is strong enough to sicken the squeamish. Of course, this strong odor also means that any creature with the scent ability will be unable to smell Ripper. Ripper, after long years of dwelling in this cave, is used to the smell (and in fact enjoys it) and can ignore it, using his scent ability normally.

If the PCs have given Ripper some bait or have taken casualties and flees, then beast drags his kills back here and feasts on their remains.

There is nothing here of any value.

5 The Open Cavern

This large open party of the cavern is actually the bulk of the space that is Ripper's home. This open muddy cavern is uninhabited and even Ripper rarely goes here. A few small bats, too small to attract Ripper's attention, hang here during the day and bugs crawl and slither in the mud. Otherwise, this area is uninhabited and empty of anything of value or interest, except for ...

5a The Escape Hatch

When Ripper was merely a large-sized hydra, he discovered this old burrow and used it as his emergency escape hatch (in case he was ever cornered). Now, the hydra has grown too large to use this entrance anymore and too fearsome to worry about being cornered, and so its sits long abandoned.

Of course, if Ripper moves to block the entrance way (1), this escape hatch is a potential way out of this death trap of a cavern.

5b The Overgrown Entrance

This is the other side of Ripper's escape hatch. It is a small burrow hole that is entirely overgrown with vines, briars and various swamp foliage. This entrance is very easy to miss unless you get very close. It requires a DC 20 Perception roll to notice it at five feet away. At ten feet the difficulty increases to a DC 25. If the PCs do not get that close, then they have no chance to notice this second entrance.

There is nothing here of any value.

6 Ripper's Den

This is where the beast sleeps. It is simply an open cave covered in tattered fur, leaves and other debris to make the creatures bed. It is unlikely that Ripper is here unless the PCs approach the entrance completely silently and keep horses and other livestock away from the cavern's mouth. There is nothing here of any value.

We Did It!

Somehow the PCs may succeed at this mission. They may drug Ripper or convince Grumblejack to fight him (don't forget Grumblejack's damage reduction!). As they drag the creature in chains back to the Horn of Abaddon, they are met once more by their dark masters. The villains appraise the beast appreciatively (and in fact your regular PCs have gained this beast as a defender of the Horn). They immediately begin to discuss what to do with the beast and where to place him, seemingly forgetting about the minions altogether.

Finally one of them notices the minions, waiting there doubtless having suffered many hardships to get them this beast. The villain looks them over and says easily the nicest thing the minions have ever heard the villain say.

"Adequate."

And with that, they are dismissed.

The Old Poisoned Sheep Trick

There is another method to capturing Ripper than defeating him in combat. The PCs can poison a sheep (or some other livestock animal) and send it into the cave. Of course, the animal doesn't want to go in the cave. But the PCs have an ogre and many pointy things and burny things, so they can likely convince it to do their bidding. But what about the poison?

The PCs were given 150 gp at the start of the mission, plus they have some meager amount of money of their own. Two doses of Oil of Taggit (injested poison, DC 15 Fort save, target is unconscious for 1d3 hours) is for sale at Lord Drowington's Manor in the black market for a mere 90 gp a dose. Of course, that is likely too much for the minions, so stealing may be required.

Has it happens, Ripper is very susceptible to Oil of Taggit and receives a -8 penalty to saves against it. That means, he needs to roll a 14 or better to save against it! And what are the chances that will happen? (Hint: 35%) Of course, if Ripper does save, he shortly comes to the entrance to investigate if there any other tasty sheep about.

Ripper **CR 7**

XP 3,200

Male unique six-headed warden hydra
N Huge magical beast
Init +3; **Senses** blind sense 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +7 natural, –2 size)
hp 57 (6d10+24); fast healing 6
Fort +9, **Ref** +10, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Melee 6 bites +7 (1d8+3)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Special Attacks pounce

TACTICS

During Combat Ripper is a stealthy murderous ambush predator that loves to hide in wait for its victims and then tear them apart. Unlike so many hydras that are consumed by the desire to kill, Ripper is cunning. It is willing to lie in wait until the ambush moment is perfect and then it pounces.

Of course once battle is joined, Ripper earns his namesake, ripping apart victims with his six vicious bite attacks.

Morale Ripper flees when reduced to 15 hp or lower.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 3, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 9
Base Atk +6; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 24 (can't be tripped)
Feats Blind Fight[B], Combat Reflexes, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes
Skills Perception +15, Stealth +17, Swim +10; **Racial Modifiers** +6 Perception, +10 Stealth
SQ hydra traits, regenerate head, warden hydra

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fast Healing (Ex) A hydra's fast healing ability is equal to its current number of heads (minimum fast healing 5). This fast healing applies only to damage inflicted on the hydra's body.

Hydra Traits (Ex) A hydra can be killed by severing all of its heads or slaying its body. Any attack that is not an attempt to sever a head affects the body, including area attacks or attacks that cause piercing or bludgeoning damage. To sever a head, an opponent must make a sunder attempt with a slashing weapon targeting a head. A head is considered a separate weapon with hardness 0 and hit points equal to the hydra's HD. To sever a head, an opponent must inflict enough damage to reduce the head's hit points to 0 or less. Severing a head deals damage to the hydra's body equal to the hydra's current HD. A hydra can't attack with a severed head, but takes no other penalties.

Regenerate Head (Ex) When a hydra's head is destroyed, two heads regrow in 1d4 rounds. A hydra cannot have more than twice its original number of heads at any one time. To prevent new heads from growing, at least 5 points of acid or fire damage must be dealt to the stump (a touch attack to hit) before they appear. Acid or fire damage from area attacks can affect stumps and the body simultaneously. A hydra doesn't die from losing its heads until all are cut off and the stumps seared by acid or fire.

Warden Hydra Warden Hydras are guardians of cultic sites and great treasures, either trained to protect such areas or simply drawn to the mystical energies therein. Their keen senses give them blindsense 60 feet and Blind-Fight as a bonus feat, and they automatically disbelieve illusions. Warden Hydras also have all-around vision and a racial bonus on Perception checks equal to their number of heads (rather than +2). A warden Hydra gains a +4 bonus to its Dexterity. Mind-affecting effects do not affect a warden Hydra unless they can affect as many targets as the Hydra has heads.

MinionQuest Pt. Two

Note: This interlude happens in Book Four, Act One: The Sack of Daveryn and largely replaces both Find the Duke (pg. 28) and Grumblejack's Bet (pg. 29).

Doomed in Daveryn

Once more the minions are summoned before their dark masters. The small talk is predictably brief.

"Fools! Idiots! Morons! Must I do everything myself?!" rants one of your overlords. All of you are stunned and utterly unsure exactly what he is going on about. Fortunately, he is quick to explain.

"You dare loaf around this city while the Duke of Daveryn remains uncaught! I want Duke Martin found and brought before us in chains! Search every building! Turn over every stone! I want him found! I care not if all of your miserable lives must be sacrificed! Find him or face my eternal wra..."

Another one of the masters shakes their head at the tirade, and interrupts the nearly rabid lord of darkness. "Don't you think we should help our minions?"

"Help? HELP!? Help just breeds weakness! Only the strong are worthy to serve ..."

"Do you want them to find the Duke or not?"

"Fine! We'll coddle them this time I suppose. But don't come crying to me when our minions turn soft!"

The other master takes over the briefing and gives you a big friendly smile. "Hello, everyone. Here's the situation. Duke Martin of Daveryn has escaped the clutches of the Fire Axe and ourselves. Doubtless he is hiding somewhere in the ruined city. Be careful, it's dangerous out there. The bugbears and ogres and ettins aren't too discriminating in which humans they attack. We'll provide you with a map of the city before the attack, 200 gp for bribes, and hmmm... do you think they need more aid?"

"More?! You've already given too much!"

"Yes, alright then. We'll assign Grumblejack the ogre to help you. He's always been great on missions like this and he'll help you move safely through the city. Well, thate everything. You want to finish up?" he turns to the raving master.

"Sure, I guess... NOW GET OUT OF MY SIGHT, YOU PATHETIC WORMS! And if you fail, don't bother returning at all!"

Grumblejack's Mission

So, the minions are given the money, a folding map of Daveryn (use the player handout from Book Four) and meet up with Grumblejack the Ogre who largely seems bored by the whole enterprise.

"Duke could be anywhere..." Grumblejack gripes. "Stupid mission."

At just that moment in a nearby camp, a large fearsome armored bugbear wearing a necklace of human ears and wielding a massive golden two-handed sword stands up on a small crate and clears his throat. All the other various monsters and horde members lazing about suddenly seem to pay attention.

"I am Burzak Gut-Eater! I am fearless! I am death in battle! And I am thirsty! Every district of this doomed city was once famous for its booze. The first monster who brings me one unopened bottle of all thirteen, that monster I will give this golden blade! Once it hung on the walls of the Baron of Westkirk! It can be yours if you are first to find my prize!

"And no hummies may win! I don't want no hummie crap in my booze! You got it? Good!"

Grumblejack's eyes suddenly light up. "Pretty sword," his whispers to no one but himself. He turns to the pack of minions and sizes them up.

"You know where Duke is?" He says to one at random. He scarcely waits for an answer.

"You know?" he says to another.

"You? That what Grumblejack thought. He could be anywhere. We start our search in bars around a city. Maybe the Duke thirsty."

And with that, Grumblejack laughs to himself and begins to stomp away in search of the liquor. Something else is obvious. The PCs and Grumblejack aren't the only group interested in that sword. Bugbears and goblins are busy assembling in conspiratorial mobs. It would appear that the game is afoot.

The PCs do have one advantage. The folding map they were given has something printed on its back. It has an invitation from the Brotherhood of Inn and Tavern Owners to try to all of the famous spirits and liquors of Daveryn while they are visiting.

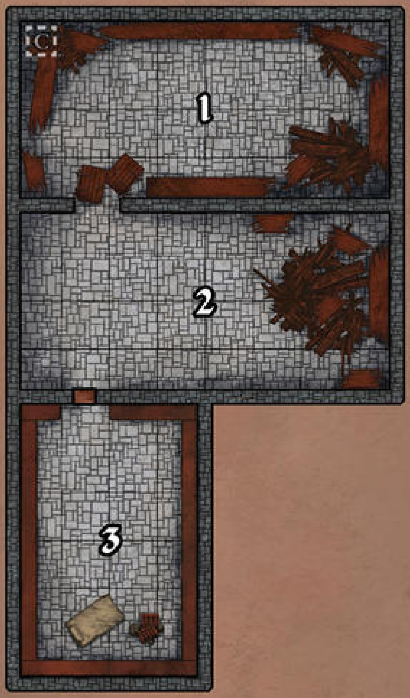
And beside that invitation is an illustrated list of the thirteen kinds of alcohol (see page 54 and 55 for that list).

MinionQuest
Part Two: Doomed in Davergyn

□ = 5'

The Burning Alchemist's Shop

The Cellars of St. Viander



A Ruined Bar

The Thirteen Liquors of Daveryn

Angleton – Harper's Malt:

When passing through the charmingly rural farmer's district of Angleton, why not try a pint of Harper's Malt, a dark malty masterpiece? A tankard of this fine beer is an experience you'll not soon forget.

Argyntile – Crystalshine:

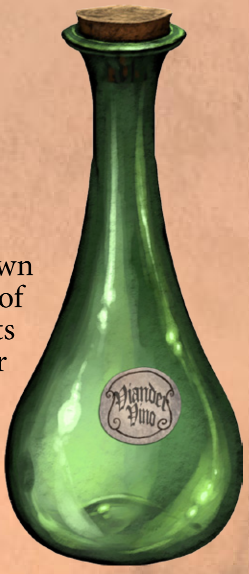
The artisans of Argyntile welcome visitors and what better way to welcome them than with a bottle of this district's traditional potable – Crystalshine. This jewel-clear whisky is made just the way it was a hundred years ago. It's made of hearty potatoes grown right here in Daveryn. It's strong stuff to be sure, but great for a cold winter's eve.

Bandelthyn – Black Bitterbiter:

Sometimes called the 3Bs, this black stout is not for the faint of heart. It's a big burly beer that will prove to anyone that you're a real man. Enjoy it today!

Cliffward – Viander Vino:

This charming white wine is grown from grapes that flourish south of the city. Cliffward is known for its bargains and what could be a better bargain than this inexpensive and delicious wine?



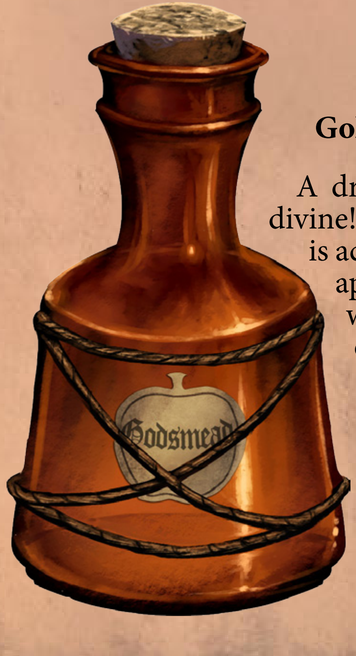
Duward – Cerulean:

When only the best will do, then there is Cerulean. This unmistakable bright blue liquor is made from a proprietary blend of herbs, spices and other secret ingredients. Drinking this amazing beverage is a pleasurable ritual to be savored. You pour the liquor through a special mesh traditionally coated in a fine local honey into a glass of chilled water.

Thus prepared, you are in for an unforgettable flavor experience. Try it with friends and celebrate the best that life has to offer! Cerulean – you've earned it!

Gattleton – Gattletale:

The people of Gattleton know their beer and when it is time to share an ale with friends, they always insist on this one. The Gattletale is a fine barley ale that is never bottled but instead is always served in small wooden kegs. That's the way it's been done for centuries and that's the way Gattleton Breweries still makes its signature beer today!



Goldenhall – Godsmead:

A drink good enough for the divine! While called a mead, this is actually a fine triple distilled apple brandy sweetened with honey. It is a favorite of the local gentry and it will be a favorite of anyone wise enough to try this delightful potable.

Glassboro – Blood-rum:

A drink unlike any other, Blood-rum is a deep red spirit made from the finest sugar beets imported from the markets of Ghastenhall. One sip and you'll understand its enduring popularity with sailors and landlubbers alike.

Haverston – The Ninepenny Knockout:

The best beer bargain in town! This strong amber beer is served only one way and it is never small. Bottled in famously gigantic two gallon bottles, this is a beer you don't want to tackle alone, unless you are truly the mightiest of men. Do you have what it takes to go nine rounds with the Ninepenny Knockout?

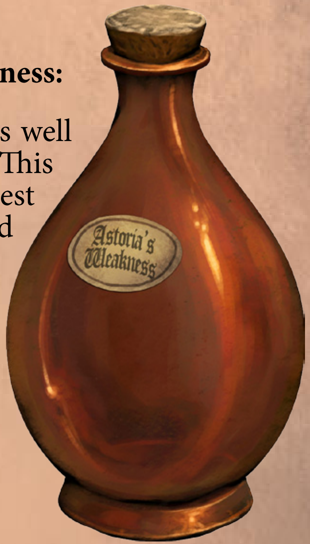
Mardleston – Mudhen:

A good red ale for good plain folks! Some say that Mardleston is the oldest part of our fair city. That long before there was even a king in Talingarde that quaint little farms perched here beside the River Briden. If that's true, you can bet those farmers were brewing their own beer. Today that tradition continues with the Mudhen. This isn't a fancy beer. This isn't a rich man's beer. Instead, this is good solid fare for good solid folks. After a hard day's work, you deserve a pint of the Mudhen.

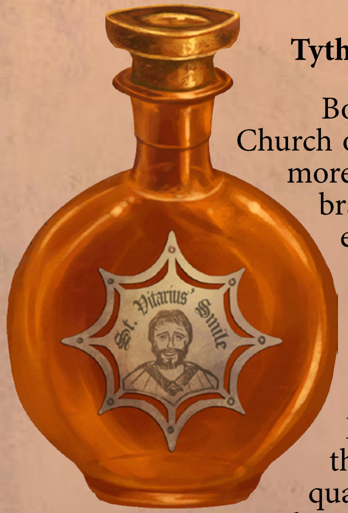
Seaward – Slambam Sam's Best Dram:

A local whiskey made from a well-guarded secret recipe involving all local ingredients and good old Daveryn know-how. This is a fine sipping whiskey – smoky, strong and smooth. Aged for seven years, this is a masterpiece of the distiller's art and not to be missed. Sold exclusively at Slambam Sam's of Seaward.

Smallward – Astoria's Weakness:



And it'll be your weakness as well after you've tried a bottle. This spiced cider is made from the best local apples and fine imported spices. Astoria's is light and not too strong, but wonderfully drinkable and soothing. Even the young can enjoy this refreshing beverage.



Tythers – St. Vitarius' Smile:

Bottled and blessed by the Church of Mitra itself, what can be more delightful than this fine brandy? The wine is imported from abroad, specially selected for only the finest flavors. Then the men of the church distill it twice, sweeten it to perfection and bottle it in Tythers. Each bottle bares the seal of the Church so you know its quality. And every purchase also goes to support the work of Mitra's chosen here in Talingarde. It's a fine drink made even finer by a good cause. Do your part today!

What Now?

The PCs can respond to Grumblejack's "mission" in either two ways. They can reject the booze scavenger hunt and try some other brilliant plan to find the Duke or they can start looking for alcohol, hoping to earn the ogre's gratitude (or at least forestall his beatings). It makes sense that the PCs should be skeptical about ignoring the mission given to them by their masters (at least initially). After all, they work for bad people who tend to respond to failure by dumping you shark tanks and similar murderous punishments. These are not good people to cross. The minions know that.

However, the problem with rejecting Grumblejack's mission is twofold. First, Grumblejack isn't wrong. This mission they've been given is quite simply idiotic. The Duke could be literally anywhere in a ruined city that stretches out for many square miles. The idea of finding the duke who has so far eluded Fire-axe's entire army of thousands of bugbears in a city full of monsters who would as soon eat the minions as say hello to them is ... well, impossible seems almost too gentle a word.

Second, Grumblejack wants to gather booze so he can own that the sword. Badly. Anyone who tries to tell the ogre they don't want to help is in for a good ogre-powered thrashing. So, the PCs are likely bullied into helping the ogre, at least temporarily.

Of course, there is no reason the PCs can't slip away from the ogre. Grumblejack may be big and tough, but he is distractible and not that perceptive. Escape though will make clear the problem with their mission. Okay, so they escaped? Now what? Which building would they like to search first? Give them an encounter with a few random wandering packs of bugbears and they should get the message. Sticking with Grumblejack is safer (the bugbears mostly leave him and his companions alone) and who knows? Maybe the Duke is thirsty. Maybe he is hanging around in a bar.

So, eventually the PCs are more or less forced into this scavenger hunt. So, how do the PCs get the thirteen liquors together? The good news is that they're not starting their hunt entirely from zero. Grumblejack has some loot and amongst that loot is a bottle of Crystalshine, miraculously unopened. And one of the PCs (determine randomly) has a bottle of Gattletale and another has a bottle of Harper's Malt. So, three of the thirteen are more or less automatic acquisitions.

Looking over the list reveals where the various liquors can be acquired. The PCs start in Duward just outside the captured palace where their dark masters are currently quartered.

The Ettin and the Ninepenny Knockout

The minions do not even make it out of Duward before they see a bottle of the Ninepenny Knockout. An ettin is half asleep (i.e. the left head is snoozing and snoring like a buzzsaw) and lounging on a pile of stolen foodstuffs and ripped up quilts and blankets. The left arm of the oaf is draped over a prized bottle of the stuff. The ettin's right head is awake and currently digging something out of its own nostril with an intensity of focus usually reserved for solving advanced calculus.

The PCs can sneak upon the distracted ettin without any great difficulty (the Ettin has a -8 penalty to its +12 Perception check for being half-asleep and half-distracted). But actually stealing the bottle is much more difficult (DC 20 Sleight of Hand check and the Ettin makes an unmodified Perception Check to notice the bottle is gone).

A better strategy is to walk up and speak with the awake ettin head (which is named Lunko). The ettin is incredibly stupid and it would be easy enough to convince the head that, for example, it is unfair that the left head (named Bunko) gets a nap while it is forced to stay awake. This would cause the ettin to go entirely asleep and make stealing the bottle a cinch. Any reasonable deception is likely to work on the dull-witted Ettin (make an opposed Bluff check against the Ettin's +0 Sense Motive).

Of course, if the Ettin just catches someone trying to take its prized bit of loot, it awakens angry and does what Ettins do best. It stands up (a move action), draws its flails and then gets about the important business of smashing everything nearby.

The Ettin is fearsome opponent for the PCs, but the good news is that Grumblejack wants that bottle of Ninepenny Knockout and so will help in the battle. The worse news is that the ettin has friends. The ettin has six bugbear allies who are resting in nearby burned out building. Every round the ettin is engaged in combat, they have a 25% chance of hearing the fight and coming to the ettin's aid. However, if the ettin is slain, they flee the battle.

The ettin actually has treasure as well if it is slain. In one of the sacks it is sleeping on are a pair of large, heavy silver candlesticks worth 60 gp each and a *potion of cure moderate wounds* labelled "Not Booze" in crudely written common.

Ettin	CR 6
XP 2,400 hp 65 (see the Ettin entry in the Bestiary)	

Bugbears (6)	CR 2
XP 600 each (3,600 XP total) hp 16 (see the bugbear entry in the Bestiary)	

The Burning Alchemist Shop

Eventually the PCs leave Duward and head off ... well, somewhere. Honestly, it could be anywhere within the city. But on the way, they see a burning shop bearing the sign of an alchemist. Beneath that sign is a small placard, already on fire that reads, "Cerulean Available for a Limited Time".

Grumblejack notices the sign immediately and runs toward the shop about to go in. Then he stop and sniffs the air. There is something that smells very fun in that place and suddenly the ogre loses his enthusiasm for charging into the burning building. And that's when he turns to the PCs.

"You get booze!"

That is the extent of his orders to the minions. They now face an unpleasant choice – anger the ogre or run into a burning building full of volatile alchemical components. Should be exciting either way.

Of course clever PCs may try to fast talk the ogre into not sending them into what may seem like certain death. This may actually work for a time. DC 15 Bluff checks briefly baffle the ogre. But in the end, Grumblejack's desire to win the contest will win out. And he will demand the PCs go face the fire.

The Joy of Random Explosions

The alchemist's shop is a burning powder keg full of noxious chemicals, potions and alchemical preparations that should be kept far away from open flames. As a result, in order to make the scene more exciting, random explosions rip through the scene. Every round, roll a d20.

At first, only 1-11 results in an explosion. Center a 4d6 fire damage, 10' radius burst (DC 12 Reflex save for half damage) from the appropriate letter marked on the map. Any nearby PCs are caught in the blast. Some of the numbers also have special effects so be sure to read the individual descriptions. 12-20 on the dice results in no explosions that round. However, the first time 17-20 is rolled, the flames expand. After the expansion, now 1-15 results in an explosion and only 16-20 results in nothing.

Also, as soon as the PCs lay eyes on the Cerulean (located at location 6), the expansion happens automatically (if it hasn't happened already) and now roll 2 d20s every round. If you roll the same location on two dice, the explosion is a twenty foot radius blast and does 6d6 fire damage.

Ground Floor

1. Entranceway

The front door to the shop is a pair of double wooden doors. The front windows jut out and display a variety of fancy bottles and alchemical preparations behind the glass. Those are clearly all ruined as intense multicolored flame bakes and boils the collection of bottles and flasks. The door is not locked and has in fact been blasted open.

2. The Main Store

The main sales floor is a large open 30'x40' chamber that is currently choked with fire and debris.

A (d20 roll 1): This is a set of shelves holding various alchemical components currently on fire and giving off a strange hissing smoke that coils and turns almost as if alive. They explode as normal if rolled, however the explosion is contained by the stone walls, so it only explodes inside the building.

B (d20 roll 2): This is a stone fire place which once warmed the shop and kept a cheerful fire going. The fire is no longer near so cheerful. Instead, the mantle has alchemical components and smolders ominously. The first time this location explodes, it explodes normally though contained by the wall. The second time it explodes, it shoots a line of fire from the fire place to the western wall five feet wide. Anyone in the line must save versus the blast or take 4d6 fire damage.

C (d20 roll 3): This is a long shelf and counter full of components, on fire. If someone examines the shelf before it explodes, there is a single potion here labelled "fire resistance" that is not even boiling (DC 15 Perception to notice). This is a *potion of resist energy (fire)* that grants resist fire 10 for 30 minutes. This may be somewhat useful here. Further, behind the counter is a small iron key (useful in the basement, see location 5). The key is easy to miss amidst the fire and chaos (DC 15 Perception).

D (d20 roll 4): There is nothing here; this is just a marker for the front door. However, the first time this number is rolled, instead of a normal explosion, a burning beam collapses. Anyone standing in or within five feet of this letter must make a DC 13 Reflex save or be trapped under burning debris. They take 2d6 of bludgeoning damage and 2d6 of fire damage (successful save halves damage). If they fail the save, they are also pinned. It takes a full round action and a successful DC 12 Strength check to escape the debris. As long as they are trapped, they continue to take 1d6 fire damage every round. Also, the front door is now sealed off and inescapable. The players must either escape through the side door, crash through a window or hope one of the explosions blows open a wall (which is a real possibility, see below).

E (d20 roll 5): Here is a large table full of potions and alchemical gear. There is sign here, fallen on the floor that reads "Today only! Buy one Alchemist's Fire, get another one free!" The four squares of this table (10'x10') count as difficult terrain.

F (d20 roll 6): There is a turned over table of gear and potions, on fire. A slick of some unidentifiable oil is on the floor that has made this area slippery. Anyone moving on the two squares between the counter and the burning table (where the letter F is actually located) must make a DC 12 Reflex save or they trip, ending their movement and falling prone.

G (d20 roll 7): A huge burning fire that covers the entire corner. Though it is impossible to tell anymore, there was once a large display case here full of potions and alchemical apparatus. The second time this result explodes, the corner blows out the wall, creating a new but perilous exit in the corner square. Of course to get through this raging wall of fire, anyone must make a DC 15 Reflex save or take 2d6 fire damage.

H (d20 roll 8): There is a shelf full of alchemical components, burning fiercely. One end of the shelf is not entirely on fire. There in a metal vial is a potion labelled "Fartham's Flawless Fire Repellant". The potion is a *potion of resist energy (fire)* that grants resist fire 10 for 30 minutes. However, the metal container it is so hot it burns to touch it,

Anyone grabbing the potion container without protection of some sort will find it searing hot and take 2d4 points of fire damage. Unless the grabber makes a DC 13 Will save, they immediately drop the vial which has a 50% chance of knocking off the lid and spilling its contents all over the floor. If the vial is grabbed with thick gloves, putting the metal vial to your lips has the same effect. The only way to make this safe to drink is to submerse it in a cool liquid for two full rounds. That or it will cool down in half an hour outside of this burning shop. The contents of the potion are unharmed by this heat.

I (d20 roll 9): There is a corner shelf of alchemical components, on fire.

3. The Backroom

This chamber is a 30'x10' rectangular room that once held all manner of back stock, supplies and store records, now unsurprisingly all aflame. In one corner of this room is a trap door in the floor (marked by a 1.) that leads down into the basement and cellar (location 5.). This trapdoor is not hard to locate. In fact the trapdoor is actually labelled with a small friendly brightly colored sign that reads "Authorized access only!" That sign is on fire.

There is only a single door into the room and it's unlocked. Also the fire has burned a hole in the back wall of the store just north of the number 3 on the map.

J (d20 roll 10): This is a pile of boxes and sacks, on fire. The flames that come off this pile of alchemical material burns a brilliant pink, sparking and swaying strangely.

K (d20 roll 11): Another pile of boxes and barrels, on fire.

4. The Side Showroom

This part of the store is actually not yet on fire and in fact, represents a fine looting opportunity for the minions. Of course, delaying too long can be very dangerous.

L (d20 roll 12): A wooden counter. There is nothing here of any interest or value. However, after the fire spreads, if this location is rolled, this does not explode. Instead a wooden beam collapses, making the square entering and leaving the side room count as difficult terrain. Anyone passing through there must make a DC 12 Reflex save or take 2d6 fire damage. Anyone in the doorway when this happens may be pinned as well (see location D above).

M (d20 roll 13): This is a long shelf full of alchemical components and apparatus. If looted before the fire spreads there is a portable alchemist's lab, three *sunrods* and two *tanglefoot bags* here, ripe for the taking. After the fire spreads, all this ruined and this area can explode as normal.

N (d20 roll 14): This is a small shelf holding varying alchemical items for sale. There is a vial here of *liquid ice* and five containers of *flash powder*. The liquid ice, if thrown on a burning location will extinguish that one location for the duration of the minion's visit inside the shop. However, if the flash powder is not removed from this shelf before it catches fire, then the entire side room is flashed with intense light. Everyone in this room must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d6 rounds.

O (d20 roll 15): This is a small locked glass case where the shop held its most valuable potions. Miraculously, the case is intact. However, it is locked (DC 20). The case appears to be made of simple glass, but the pains are actually alchemically treated crystal that is almost impossible to break (DC 20 Strength check to break and 1d3 of the potions inside are ruined as well). Inside the case are eight potions, each labelled: 3 *potions of cure light wounds*, 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, a *potion of invisibility*, a *potion of enlarge person*, and a *potion of bull's strength*. These potions are ruined 1d3 rounds after the fire expands and immediately if the case explodes.

5. The Basement

This sublevel is, likely to the PCs great relief, not currently on fire. However, smoke is beginning to settle down here and it seems only a matter of time before the fire expands down here. This plain 20' x 20' chamber has a stone floor and brick walls. It is largely empty save for three notable features.

First, there is a door on the north wall. The door is heavily reinforced and has a stout lock on it (DC 30 to pick). The key to this door is upstairs in the old counter (Location C).

Second, part of the ceiling of this basement is on fire. It is a small smoldering flame that does not seem too dangerous. However this is deceptive. When the fire expands, this part of the roof (marked **5a**) collapses. Everyone in the location or within ten feet takes 2d6 fire damage and 2d6 bludgeoning damage (a DC 12 Reflex dodges the debris, resulting in no bludgeoning damage and halving the fire damage). This area is then difficult terrain. Note that the guardians here (see below) are not immune to this damage.

Third, at 5b, two humanoid figures standard guard at the locked door. These are actually guardians of the cellar put here by the overprotective alchemist who has long ago fled Daveryn. They turn their heads and demand a password of anyone who approaches the door. No one left alive in the city knows this password; however it is simply "Please Don't Kill Me".

Failing to give the password causes these two guardians to attack all intruders (i.e. all the minions). The guardians will not under any circumstances leave the basement.

6. The Cellar

At last, the PCs have survived the flames and defenders of this dangerous shop to arrive in the cellar. The cellar is not on fire and is in fact quite damp and cool. The walls are entirely covered with wooden wine racks. This small, secure room is where the alchemist kept his finest stores and private stock of expensive wine (which was after all his main business). In the middle of the north wall on its own little pedestal is perhaps the last unopened bottle of Cerulean left in all of Daveryn. It is technically worth about 100 gp but more importantly is the key to winning the contest. There is also a dozen bottles of Viander Vino as well. Further, there are also about two hundred bottles of other wine here or various qualities. These would be worth a small fortune to the bugbears and, if you could keep the bugbears from killing you and simply taking the wine, could be sold to them for 5 gp a bottle (they would mostly pay in stolen loot).

Further, a successful Appraise check (DC 15) will identify that ten of these bottles are not just any wine, they are expensive, snooty elven wine imported from the mainland. This wine could be sold for 100 gp each in the larger cities of Talingarde. The minions could use these expensive bottles for many things. But their best use is to give them to their masters at the end of the adventure thereby getting them out of trouble for the mess they are invariably going to make of this adventure.

Don't forget as soon as the PCs see the bottle of Cerulean, the fire spreads and gets worse. They have their prize. Now all they have to do is escape with it.

Guardians of the Cellar (2) — CR 3

XP 800 each (1,600 XP total)
Carytid column
N Medium construct
Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14 (-1 Dex, +5 natural)
hp 36 (3d10+20)
Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +1
DR 5/—; **Immune** construct traits, magic
Defensive Abilities shatter weapons

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.
Melee mwk longsword +8 (1d8+4/19-20)

TACTICS

During Combat The twin statues stay perfectly until someone touches the door without uttering the password. Then they attack, slashing with their swords. They continue the attack as long as there are intruders within the lower level. They will not leave the lower level under any circumstances.

Morale The guardians defend their post to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1
Base Atk +3; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 16 (cannot be disarmed)
SQ statue

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Immunity to Magic (Ex) A caryatid column is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A *transmute rock to mud* spell deals 1d6 points of damage per caster level to a caryatid column, with no saving throw.

Transmute mud to rock immediately heals any and all damage currently suffered by a caryatid column.

A *stone to flesh* spell does not actually change the column's structure but negates its damage reduction and immunity to magic for 1 round.

Shatter Weapons (Ex) Whenever a character strikes a caryatid column with a weapon (magical or nonmagical), the weapon takes 3d6 points of damage. Apply the weapon's hardness normally. Weapons that take any amount of damage in excess of their hardness gain the broken condition.

Statue (Ex) A caryatid column can stand perfectly still, emulating a statue (usually one that is holding up the ceiling, like a carved column). An observer must succeed at a DC 20 Perception check to notice the caryatid column is alive. If a caryatid column initiates combat from this pose, it gains a +6 bonus on its initiative check.

Let the Cheating Begin

Once, the PCs have successfully looted the alchemist's shop and recovered the bottle of Cerulean, Grumblejack is incredibly pleased with them. "We win contest for sure!" the ogre booms. On the other hand, if the Cerulean was not recovered, he is more morose but just as determined as ever to collect all of the booze. And then the ogre gets a brilliant idea. "Wait! We should cheat!"

The ogre begins sneaking around (not very successfully) until he and the PCs notice a band of four bugbears digging amongst the ruins. They are clearly looking amongst broken bottles of beer, hoping to find an intact bottle. One of them carries a large sackcloth bag that has the clinking sound of several bottles within it.

Grumblejack gives the order "Steal their booze!" and then hides behind a hill. The bugbears are about sixty feet away and do not seem to have yet noticed our intrepid band of minions.

So, what do the PCs do? The easiest solution is to sneak over there, steal the bag (or its contents) and sneak back. If the PCs managed to recover the *potion of invisibility* from the alchemist's shop this might be almost trivial. Two of the bugbears are thoroughly distracted by digging and get no perception check. The other two have a Perception skill of +8 to notice thieves.

If the bugbears notice the minions this turns into a straight combat encounter. Almost refreshingly, the minions are facing opponents here they have a reasonable chance of winning against. Even better, Grumblejack may actually help.

The problem with this fight is that there are only four bugbears *at first*. But these bugbears are a small part of a band of about a hundred warriors camping around this location. If the fight stretches on for more than three rounds, there is a 50% chance of every round thereafter that 1d3 more bugbears join in the fray. This battle could soon get out of hand. Of course stealth skillfully avoids this escalation. A DC 20 Perception check by the minions will realize that literally almost a hundred bugbears are camped within a few hundred yards of this dig site.

Regardless, however the PCs end getting the contents of the bag it contains two bottles of Mudhen, a bottle of Gattletale (which the PCs probably already had) and a bottle of Astoria's Weakness. If anyone thinks to continue the bugbear's search, a DC 20 Perception check finds a buried bottle of Bandelthyn Black Bitterbiter.

Bugbears (4) — CR 2

XP 600 each (2,400 XP total)
hp 16 (see the bugbear entry in the Bestiary)

Bloody Thieving Goblins!

Alas, the PCs aren't the only one who can cheat. And after 1d3 nights of searching the town, the PCs experience this when a group of goblin sneak thieves try to steal their booze. Zugrot Thoatcutter leads a pack of a dozen goblin warriors. They too have had the brilliant plan of cheating to win the contest and have decided the PCs look like perfect targets. So a dozen goblins wait with short bows behind a nearby ruined building. They are to keep still as Zugrot sneaks into camp and steals the liquor. If Zugrot is caught and has to flee, then the archers will provide cover as the veteran thief flees.

The attack happens in the middle of the night. Assuming the PCs are clever enough to post watches then Zugrot must get past the watchman. Zugrot doesn't mind employing pure stealth but if that proves impossible, he resorts to backstabbing whoever is on guard. Zugrot is after all a murderous little git. However the PCs deal with the goblins (and if Zugrot falls, all the rest flee in blind panic into the night), they may very well end up with Zugrot's collection of bottles which include a bottle of Black Bitterbiter, a bottle of Bloodrum and a bottle of Godsmead. That likely leaves the PCs with two boozes they haven't got yet ... Slambam Sam's Best Dram and St. Vitarius Smile. The hunt continues!

Zugrot Throatcutter — CR 3

XP 800 each
Male goblin rogue 4
NE Small humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +4 Dex, +1 size)
hp 22 (4d8+4);
Fort +2, **Ref** +8, **Will** +1
Defensive Abilities evasion, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee mwk short sword +8 (1d6+2)
Ranged short bow +7 (1d6)
Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

During Combat Zugrot's plan in this fight is the same plan he's had since he was goblin whelp: steal silently and backstab anything that gets in his way.
Morale Zugrot first priority is always his own skin. He flees at 11 hp.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8
Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 18
Feats Point Blank Shot, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (short sword)
Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +6, Climb +9, Disable Device +11, Perception +7, Ride +15, Sense Motive +7, Stealth +15; Racial Modifiers +4 Ride, +4 Stealth
Languages Goblin
SQ rogue talent (fast stealth), trapfinding
Gear masterwork short sword, shortbow with 40 arrows, studded leather armor, 5 gp, thieves tools

Goblins (12) — CR 1/3

XP 135 each (1,620 XP total)
hp 6 (see the goblin entry in the Bestiary)

The Cellars of St. Vitarius

Located in Tythers, the Cellars of St. Vitarius where every bottle of St. Vitarius' Smile was bottled, is not hard to find. There are even signs still up on intact buildings directing you to the place and depicting smiling priests of Mitra asking you to buy a bottle today!

The place is also a complete wreck, burned nearly to the ground. However a DC 10 Perception check reveals two things about this ruin. First, something large and angry has been rampaging through this wreck of a place and there is a remarkably intact trap door in one corner of the ruined bottle shop. What there is no signs of, on the surface at least, is one drop of St. Vitarius' Smile.

If the trap door is examined, it has deep claw marks in it and been much abused, though it seems to still function. In fact, the cellars have become the lair of a very hungry manticore named Gorimax. The manticore once served a bugbear lieutenant of Sakkarot Fireaxe, but the bugbear died in battle and the beast has since been free and roaming the ruins of Daveryn eating random survivors. It still wears its collar as a sign of its former servitude.

The manticore has corned a human in the cellars (he's not smart enough to recognize a priest of Mitra) and has been unable to dig it out and now, after three days, it is starving. Which brings us to the PCs. The beast is famished and the PCs look delicious. Of course, the beast can be talked to and bribed with offerings of food. Five days' worth of rations (which it hungrily wolves down) will placate it enough to at least talk. It is also susceptible to being fawned over. Plied with food and flattery, Gorimax will reveal that is has corned a human in the cellars who it would very much like to eat if the PC would flush it out.

Of course if the PCs do attack or offer it an insulting bribe, it takes to the air above the cellars and rains down spikes on them, only swooping down after its full arsenal of twenty four spikes is expended. The PCs could take shelter in the cellar of course (which is mapped on page 57), but then they are just as trapped as the priest (see location 3 below).

Grumblejack could be of great help in this encounter. He can fly (he is a half-fiendish ogre after all) and engage the manticore in the air. Of course the ogre's inclination is not to risk the encounter. He will spot the ruin and the signs of something monstrous there from afar and send the PCs in on their own while he hangs back. It should be a familiar drill by now!

Gorimax the Manticore	CR 5

XP 1,600
hp 57 (see the manticore entry in the Bestiary)

1. Wrecked Cellar

Once this cellar housed the mainstay of the St. Vitarius' cellars stores. Now it is a desolate wreck. The racks are entirely splintered, sharp manticore spikes are embedded in the walls, and any bottles here are long ago broken.

2. The Den of Gorimax

This wrecked subterranean room is where the manticore lairs. Once there were countless bottles of St. Vitarius' Smile were stored. Now, there is not one intact bottle. Instead, everywhere are smashed wine racks, broken glass and splintered furniture. The manticore has used this debris to make something of a nest against the eastern wall of the chamber. If the PCs do manage to sneak up on the cellars without making too much noise, there is a 25% chance that Gorimax is sleeping on this nest.

Of course, Gorimax remains famished and with his scent ability he is likely to detect food (i.e. the minions) coming. Still, this room is not where Gorimax prefers to hunt. Confined, the beast is not able to take advantage of his favorite tactic, attacking from the air. So, if he feels at all threatened, he will charge out of here into the open air.

3. The Priest's Redoubt

The door to this room has been locked, barred and barricaded. The lock is formidable (DC 30 to pick) and the barricade would take inhuman strength to batter down (DC 25 Strength check to break). This is the home of an elderly priest of Mitra named Brother Cassius who is hoping to hold out until the forces of the king retake the city. He barricaded himself down here with months' worth of food and water that he has been carefully rationing. He has even made himself a makeshift latrine by digging a tile in the floor and burrowing out a small hole, which after use he recovers.

Brother Cassius, however is almost mad with loneliness and eager for company. He has been locked in this room for weeks alone. The easiest way to get into this room is to get rid of the manticore either by combat and bribery and then to talk your way in. Brother Cassius is ready to believe that the PCs are soldiers of the king return to Daveryn to reclaim the city (DC 10 Bluff check if the PCs take this line. He may also be persuaded that they are fellow refugees (though he does not have the supplies to spare for them, he will admit; DC 20 to get him to open the door with this line).

Regardless of how they get the door open, Brother Cassius is too old and frail to be to be a threat even to minions. He knows nothing of any importance. What he does have is six months' worth of food and water, twenty bottles of St. Vitarius' Smile and 2000 gp in sacred silver relics he saved from a church before it was sacked.

We Did It?!

Assuming they've avoid any theft or breakage, there is only one more bottle to track down – Slambam Sam's Best Dram and, as fate would have it, that particular ruined bar is where the Duke of Daveryn is currently hiding. Yes, Grumblejack was right – the Duke was hiding in a bar (note that this a change from his original hiding place published in Book Four). The minions actually have a chance to successfully complete this seemingly impossible errand.

The bar itself is utterly wrecked, the walls mostly missing and the whole structural integrity of the place has been compromised. Exposed to the elements, the bar is covered with dirt and debris. However, a successful DC 15 Perception check turns up a surviving unopened bottle of the sought-after whiskey. As the PCs are doubtlessly celebrating their victory and about to return to claim their reward, a single haggard figure emerges armed with an obviously magical rapier from a hidden basement.

"You're human..." he stammers. "Tell me, are you servants of the king?"

Duke Martin of Daveryn **CR 13**

XP 25,600
Male human aristrocrat 10/fighter 5
LN Medium humanoid
Init +6; **Sense** Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 shield)
hp 87 (10d8+5d10+15)
Fort +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +9; +1 vs. fear
Defensive Abilities Bravery +1

OFFENSE

Speed 35 ft.
Melee +2 *rapier* +20/+15/+10 (1d6+6/15–20) or silver dagger +17/+12/+7 (1d4+2/19–20)
Special Attacks weapon training (light blades +1)

TACTICS

During Combat If the duke flees if faced with an obviously superior foe. However, in the PCs case he will try to slaughter them all to keep them silent. Then he flees.

Morale Certain that only torture awaits him if he's captured, Duke Martin will fight to death to avoid be taken..

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14
Base Atk +12; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 26
Feats Dodge, Fleet, Improved Critical (Rapier), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Vital Strike, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Rapier), Weapon Specialization (Rapier)
Skills Bluff +17, Diplomacy +28, Disguise +11, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (nobility) +10, Linguistics +6, Perception +10, Perform (dance) +11, Perform (sing) +11, Perform (string) +11, Ride +12, Sense Motive +10
Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Halfling
Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds, potion of invisibility*;
Other Gear +2 *glamered chain shirt*, masterwork buckler, +2 *rapier*, silver dagger, *circlet of persuasion*, *cloak of resistance* +1, signet ring of House Daveryn (worth 500 gp), 4 days food, waterskin

The correct answer is an enthusiastic "Yes!" Then all the PCs have to do is lie to the Duke, concocting some sort of story about meeting the army or rendezvousing with scouts or whatever. Duke Daveryn is desperate and ready to believe their ludicrous lies. They can then lead him back to their wicked masters and viola! The minions have actually succeeded at their mission.

And they had better lie because Duke Daveryn is ready and able to kick all of their butts. With fifteen levels and thousands of gold worth of magical equipment, there is no way the PCs are going to defeat him in combat. If he gets one whiff that they are actually agents of a cult worshipping Asmodeus or are trying to capture him, he leaves no survivors. Only Grumblejack survives because the Duke can't follow him when he flies away to tell his masters.

Seriously, the Duke does an average of 29.5 points of damage a round with all his attacks, he criticals on a 15 or better, he's faster than the PCs and his saves are great. Unless they get incredibly lucky, he's going to eat them. And that's fine. Minions don't always get happy endings. And who says there's no happy ending? Grumblejack grabs all the booze and flies off, getting his magic sword for the sacrifice of just a few measly minions. That's a victory.

However, if the PCs do (wisely) lie to the Duke and get him back to their masters, no one is more surprised than the villains that these minions have succeeded at their mission. Further, it is possible that the PCs have collected quite a bit of treasure – the wine bottles from the alchemist, the sacred silver relics from Brother Cassius and maybe even a few left over potions. Even after they skim a substantial percentage, that's a lot of money to turn over to the bosses.

As the Duke is dragged away in chains to face torture and death and treasure is heaped at the villains' feet, they merely nod. They are clearly happy at the minions' performance as they speak a single word flatly.

"Adequate."

Of course if the minions somehow survive and come back without then they are in deep trouble.

"Fools! Idiot! Morons! The mission we assigned you was so easy a child could have done it! This organization does not tolerate failure! Grumblejack, show them the price of failure!" The ogre smiles broadly and wickedly. He's got a new golden sword he is aching to try out...

NOTE: Let your regular group of PCs keep any treasure turned over to them and Grumblejack now has a shiny new magic weapon.

MinionQuest Pt. Three

Messing Up Matharyn

Note: This adventure happens in Book Six during the PCs three year reign as lords of Talingarde. It can happen any time after the new king is crowned, but probably makes the most sense at least six months after the PCs ascension to the throne.

Within the city of Matharyn the most exclusive of neighborhoods is the famed Golden Bow. Forty four manor houses line a wide portion of the River Danyth (often simply called the Lake). It can take generations to even have a chance to claim one of these exclusive properties. Ownership of these prized estates marks you as an important family of the capital. Now several of these estates sit empty and unclaimed, their owners having fled to join the Princess Bellinda's army.

Our band of villains would like these manor houses cleared out and ready to be given to either their quisling servants or perhaps for their own personal use. This should be a routine, even mundane task, well suited to being handled by bookkeepers and fawning underlings. However, one of the manor houses seems somehow defended or at least very prone to mishaps.

Three groups of minions have already been sent to Harynvale Manor and none have reported back. The death of a few bumbling servants is not a matter near important enough to demand the personal attention of the villains themselves. After all, our villains are concerned with matters affecting the future of the entire kingdom. But perhaps it is time to send someone more elite and more capable into the manor to find out what is really going one.

Instead they send the PCs.

And that's unfortunate because there is a reason nobody is coming out of Harynvale Manor. That house is a bear trap loaded with all manner of deadly mechanisms and dire trickery. A vengeful lord loyal to the previous regime has transformed his family estate into a physical statement of his vengeance. And no one, absolutely no one, is taking his family home without a fight.

It is into this deadly death trap our band of minions must go. They are sent in with little hint of the danger they must face and few resources. They truly don't even know exactly what they are looking in this house of horrors. And this time, they don't even have an ogre to help.

It's just par for the course in the life of a long-suffering minion.

Storm Harynvale Manor!

Read this to your players:

Once more you are summoned before their dark masters. Once more an opportunity to serve! No doubt this won't be like all the other missions! This one will hopefully not involve being eaten by a hydra, robbed by an ogre or being burned alive in an alchemist's shop.

Gone are the days when you are summoned to some tent or a make-shift camp in a muddy field. Now, you are brought to the old palace where powerful villains sit on their newly claimed thrones. You are about to announce yourselves when suddenly one of your terrifying overlords stands up and begins yelling.

"Fool! Idiots! Morons! Must I be surrounded by incompetents?! Why have you not reported back after your invasion of Harynvale Manor? What have you discovered! You will suffer if you think you can withhold its secre..."

Another one of your lords leans over and whispers in the ear of the yelling master, interrupting him mid-rant. "Those minions never came out of Harynvale. This is the new team. You know ... the replacements..."

"Of course it is! I knew that! As I was saying... you will report back AFTER you invade Harynvale Manor and sack the place for any valuables or information or ... whatever else may be in there."

Another of your lords speaks. "Harynvale Manor is located on the Golden Bow, the richest and most exclusive neighborhood in the city. The aging old fool who once ran the place, Lord Harynvale, has revealed himself as a traitor and has fled the city. We want his estate seized and everything of any value within claimed for the new regime. Most importantly, we are certain that Lord Haryn is an important figure in the resistance. You will go there, explore the entire house and make sure it is safe for our use. If you find any intelligence about the resistance bring it to us immediately! And, in case it needs to be said, we need the manor house intact. So don't burn it down or do anything too destructive."

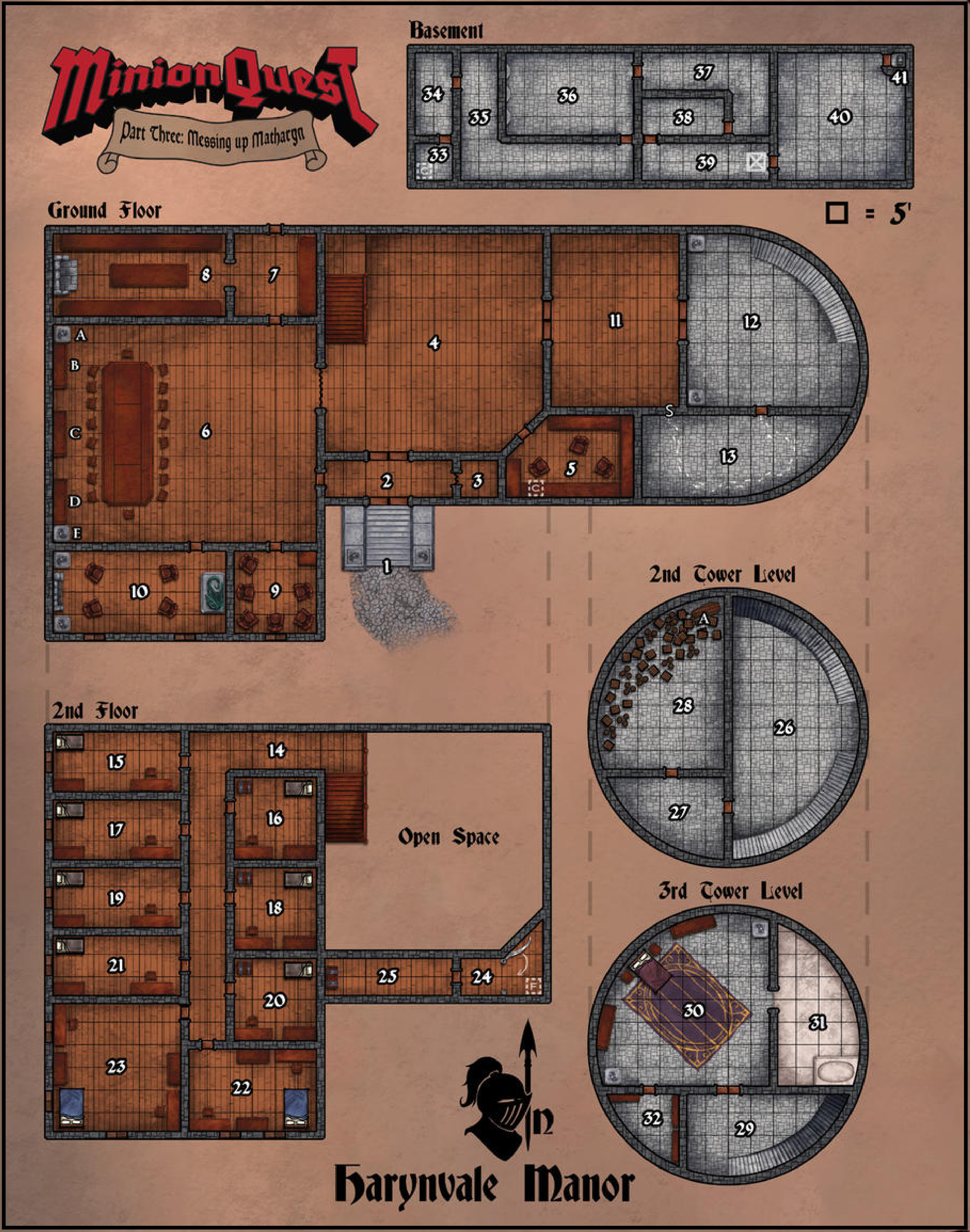
"Perhaps we should assign Grumblejack to this mission...to aid them."

"The ogre? I thought you wanted the house intact."

"It is one empty house! How difficult could it be?"

The discussion stops and everyone turns and looks at your band. "Maybe they'll do better than the last group...."

As you are dismissed, no one seems convinced.


MinionQuest
Part Three: Messing up Mathargn
Basement
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Harynvale Manor

The Vengeance of Stephan Harynvale

It is no secret that Harynvale Manor was once the home of Lord Marcus Harynvale (pro. HAR-ren-vale), an aging noble who on good days could remember his own name. Rarely Lord Marcus was cogent enough that he could again repeat the same old war stories about when he served with the Victor eighty years ago. But what is less well known is that Lord Harynvale's nephew, Stephan of Harynvale, is not a doting old fool. Instead, he is one of Talingarde's more capable trap makers and security experts.

When it became obvious to Stephan after the Battle of Fallingsbridge that Talingarde and Matharyn was going to fall into the hands of Asmodeans, Stephan put his aging uncle on a boat to the mainland and spent a large portion of the family fortune turning their manor house into a death trap. He used all his skills to make sure that anyone who entered the house would never exit alive.

Stephan knew that the Asmodeans would eventually storm this family's manor house. And Stephan hates Asmodeans with a fire that cannot be quenched. By the time he was finished, Harynvale Manor was his monument of vengeance against those who had conquered his homeland and were forcing him to flee.

But even he was surprised at what he found in his uncle's basement. It turned out the House of Harynvale owned an ancient stone golem that had long guarded the wealth of his family. He had new orders for the construct and tasked it with defending the place. At last he was finished and his masterpiece of vengeance was complete.

Stephan was just about to leave the manor house and join his uncle on the mainland when one of his traps misfired. Stephan was slain and now haunts the manor house. He is living spirit of this place and discovered that the stone golem still obeyed his commands even though he could only whisper a few words a day through the veil of death.

Between the ghost and the stone golem and Stephan's bevy of traps, Harynvale manor has become a nightmare. This is the sort of place that demands a skilled band of adventurers to defeat its many safeguards and security measures. But what got sent here instead was minions. The first band barely made it out of the grand ballroom. The second band got ripped to pieces in the dining hall. And the third group actually made it far enough that they got to be smashed into pieces by the golem.

The PCs are the fourth group of doomed minions to face the vengeance of Stephan Harynvale. Will they fare any better?

Dealing with the Ghost

The manor is haunted by a furious Stephan Harynvale and if the PCs are going to explore and survive this house of horrors, they must first realize this and move to banish him. The ghost is not strong enough to manifest as a typical ghostly spirit and attack. In fact, the spirit's grip on this plane is extremely tenuous. If the PCs can find all of Stephan's body and give the bones a proper Mitran burial, then Stephan's spirit will be banished from this plane. A DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check reveals this. And if the PCs can't figure it out, they always consult an expert.

At that point, the stone golem will no longer receive new commands and will be stuck following old orders. The traps will stop resetting and reloading themselves, items will stop animating and trying to hinder the PCs and the house will generally get a lot safer to explore. Unfortunately, Stephan's body is no longer in one piece.

When Stephan died, the double blade trap cut him into four pieces: his head, his torso and arms and his two legs. His body remains where it fell, up in the hidden attic at location 24. The head and left leg fell through the trap door just as it snapped closed. The head came to rest in a chair in the library (location 5). The left leg remains in the library still along with quite a bit of dried blood. The head was discovered by another group of minions and put in a sack. It is now in the tower where that group perished (room 27), along with quite a few other corpses. And the right leg was dragged off by a large and particularly vicious hissing cockroach to its hidey hole beneath the bed in one of the guest rooms (location 20). So, putting Stephan back together again is no easy chore.

Further, there is a small family cemetery not shown on the map. The family mausoleum there has an empty space perfect to intern Stephan's body. There is even an empty coffin in the storage chamber (location 28). It isn't strictly essential, but it is convenient and avoids having to buy a coffin for a proper burial ceremony. Acquiring a priest of Mitra isn't hard. They are still all over Matharyn despite various degrees of persecution. One could easily be talked into coming out here (or kidnapped). Father Barthyn Miller (male human LG expert 4/cleric 1 of Mitra) in fact has a small church not far from the bow.

Note that Stephan doesn't want to be peaceably buried. He is still full of vengeance and wrath and wants to vent it on new groups of Asmodeans (like our minions). So, his funeral will be filled with strange gusts of wind, cloudy weather, and strange voices in the air that cry and whisper "Don't let the devils, put me away... I must defend the manor house." This will disturb the priest, but if lied to about the source will likely continue the burial regardless, never really understanding what he's doing.

Approaching the Manor

The Harynvale manor house is a large mansion that exudes obvious wealth and sophistication. There is only one visible entrance at the front. The windows are all shuttered and boarded up. There is a large green space and wrought iron fence, but the gate is wide open and crossing the lawn presents no danger.

There is actually a second entrance in the rear (see Location 7) but to notice it, the PCs must state they are circling the manor house. This is the servant's entrance and leads into the kitchen. None of the three other groups thought to seek out or use this entrance and it is actually the safest way into the manor house since it avoids the deadly Grand Ballroom (location 4).

From the exterior it is obvious that the house consists of two parts. The western main house is two tall stories high. The walls of the house are made of ornate stone reinforced with great beams of hard wood taken from the Caer Bryr.

The east wing of the house is a three story tower, largely made of cut stone. It rises up to a high closed tower with a pointed turret roof. Atop the roof still flies a battered pair of flags, the Mitran banner of Darian Talingarde and the house standard of the Harynvale family beneath. Tattered and worn in the breeze, both of these flags have obviously not been taken down or cared for in many weeks.

There are several other small buildings on the property not shown on the map. These are servant quarters and a carriage house for the buggy. These wooden buildings were completely emptied by the house servants when they fled Harynvale manor and are devoid of anything of either value or danger.

Just a few hundred feet from the back of the manor house is the River Danyth, slowly moving through the center of town towards the sea. There is a small dock and a boathouse designed to launch and house some variety of small pleasure craft. Currently that craft is missing and all that is to be bound in the boat house is a large supply of rope, a few unremarkable pieces of nautical equipment and an empty mooring for a boat. Near the river there is also a small family cemetery full of old grave stones and mausoleums,

All in all, Harynvale manor is a boring, empty place from the outside. It is quiet and there are no signs of recent habitation. The lawn is overgrown and the hedges have not been trimmed. However even from a distance it is obvious that the front door is slightly open, obviously unlocked. It is no problem to climb up the stone stairs and enter the place. No problem at all...

1. Entrance

The entrance to the manor follows a stone path of cobblestone tiles leading from the open front gate past an empty carriage house and overgrown lawn. A set of stairs leads up to a large set of double wooden doors. The doors are ornately framed in iron fixtures and partially ajar. Two statues of Mitran angels guards the entry way. Everything is as it appears, however there is a note etched on the front door in the common tongue. "To the faithful of Mitra, stay out. To the usurpers in the service of Asmodeus, come in. Thou art welcome here."

The carved scrawl is jagged, angry and fairly recent.

2. Vestibule

This small empty vestibule is covered in leaves that have blown in through the partially open door. The wind has also stirred up the dust enough that there no cobwebs, still the various blown detritus and cobwebs reveal that no one has been taking care of this place for several months. The door creeks ominously as its opened.

There is a large open archway that leads into the Grand Ballroom (see location four below). To the east is a small archway covered with a tattered curtain. Above the archway is a small placard that reads "Cloak". To the west is a closed door.

On the north wall, there are two portraits, both badly damaged by wind and rain. On the left is an older gentleman dressed in noble finery with a placard that reads "Lord Marcus Harynvale". To the right of the archway is a badly damaged painting of a younger gentleman labelled "Stephan Harynvale". Scratched into the oil paint and canvas is the word "welcome".

Otherwise there is nothing of interest in this small chamber.

3. Cloak Room

This is a small empty room with several racks that once held, obviously enough, cloaks and jackets. In the northern corner of the room are scattered 5 gp on the floor. However if anyone goes for the coins, the ceiling drops on them and an echoing malignant laughter is heard. A successful Perception check (DC 20) notices that a large beam across the ceiling is poised to collapse. This trap only activates if the spirit of Stephan has not been put to rest.

Collapsing Ceiling Trap CR 2

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC --

EFFECTS

Trigger someone reaches for the coins; **Reset** none
Effects Atk +12 (3d6 bludgeoning damage); multiple targets (all targets inside the cloak room, a 10 ft. by 10 ft. area)

4. Grand Ballroom

This expansive chamber is paneled with hardwood and clearly intended to entertain a large gathering. A grand staircase leads upstairs. Overhead is a beautiful crystalline chandelier that still glows with a faint magical luminescence. The floor is a checkerboard of pale wood and dark wood squares each a foot by foot square. However, a DC 20 Perception check reveals that that entire chamber is covered in small sharp cuts, some which still have dried blood in them. This is where a band of the PC's predecessors met their grisly end. In fact this entire room is a death trap. If anyone steps on the dark tiles or simply casually crosses the chamber, the chandelier descends and begins to fill the chamber with weird kaleidoscope lights and darkly playful calliope music. And then the chandelier fires a thousand tiny crystalline arrow heads filling the room with death for ten rounds.

After the trap is discharged, the arrow heads begin to slowly float back and reload into place. This process takes 1d3 days and only happens if the spirit of Stephan is active. After that, the trap resets. Deactivating the trap requires somehow climbing or levitating up to the chandelier mechanism, twenty five feet above the floor.

Chandelier of Death CR 4

Type mechanicall; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger someone steps on any of the black tiles **Reset** manual
Effects Atk +10 ranged (×1d4) (1d8l/×3); multiple targets (all targets in the grand ballroom)

One round after the trigger is activated, the trap is sprung and the chandelier begins to descend and rotate, firing razor sharp crystalline arrow heads at every character in the room. The trap runs for 10 full rounds, after which it is exhausted and must be manually reloaded (this takes the ghost 1d3 days). Each round, the pillar fires 1d4 crystalline arrow heads at each character in the chamber. Characters holding a tower shield can gain total cover as a standard action, avoiding all of these attacks. A character standing behind the character holding the tower shield gains a +4 cover bonus; any other characters lined up in this fashion only gain a +2 cover bonus to AC.

5. Library

This room once held hundreds of books but all the shelves are empty. The Haryn family motto is engraved above the door "Seven Cardinals, Three Aspects, One Faith". The motto proclaims family loyalty to the Mitran church and is the key to opening the safe in room 30.

There are also three large leather chairs here. Behind the southeastern chair is a severed human left leg, weeks old (Stephan's of course).There is a trap door in the ceiling above the shelves that is not easy to find by happenstance (DC 30 Perception test). However, if the PCs specifically state they are looking for a trap door in the ceiling, the Perception check drops to a much easier DC 20. Of course, this is likely only to happen if the PCs have found Stephan's notes in the Smoking Room (location 9).

6. Dining Hall

This chamber is in pristine conditions and looks ready for a formal dinner (save for the absence of anything to eat). There is a dining table with seats for eighteen. It is set with a pair of fine silver candelabra (worth 50 gp each).

A This is a statue of a knight in plate armor wielding a great axe, made with such artistry it seems almost alive. If the handle of the axe is pulled (DC 25 Perception check to find the mechanism), the knight slides over revealing a trap door leading down to the basement landing (33).

B This is a china cabinet, currently empty.

C This is a silverware cabinet full of carefully arrange spoons, knives, forks and serving dishes. This is a trap. The knives, forks and even the edges of the plates have been honed to razor sharpness and are springloaded to fire forth with great velocity if the cabinet is opened or even roughly tampered with. If anyone bothers to collect the fired silverware, they are worth 250 gp in total.

Springloaded SIlverware Trap CR 3

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger opening the silverware cabinet; **Reset** none
Effects Everyone in the front of the ten foot wide cabinet; 4d6 damage (DC 20 Reflex save for half damage)

D This is another china cabinet, also empty.

E Another statue of a knight holding a greatsword. Though of similar artistry, it lacks any sort of mechanism.

7. Serving Room

This largely empty room was once used by servants to serve the nearby dining hall (6.) at banquets. Now there are only a single table, devoid of any serving gear. The door on the north wall is the servants entrance. It is currently locked, but relatively easy to pick (DC 20).

8. Kitchen

This is a large kitchen that has long been packed up and emptied. Walls are lined with tables, a massive fireplace is on west wall and a big table is in the center of the room. Otherwise, the room is unremarkable.

9. Smoking Room

This wood paneled chamber is dominated by six large leather chairs. In the north-east corner is an empty liquor cabinet. There are window in the southern wall, currently locked and shuddered. Stephan sat here enjoying a drink and cigar before he went to the hidden attic (24.) where a trap misfired and slew him. However a letter lies underneath one of the chairs (DC 20 Perception to find). It reads "Bill due on spring loaded blades installed above library 250 gp." This hint may lead our minions to discover the hidden trapdoor in the ceiling of the library (5).

10. Trophy Room

This large elegant wood-paneled room has a large fireplace along the west wall flanked by two ornate stone statues of knights of the Alerion. There are four high-backed leather chairs, each coated in a thin layer of dust. Various animal heads are mounted about the room including a stag, a bear and a mountain lion. On the east wall is a large-sized stuffed drake mounted on a pedestal. There are two windows on the southern wall, both locked and shuddered.

When the PCs enter the room it is at first dark and empty of any activity or signs of life. However as the PCs looks around the room, the fire place flames up and briefly burns with an eerie green flame (assuming the spirit of Stephan has not yet been exorcised). The green flame occasionally has faces within the fire and whispers something low an ominious that cannot be made out further than five feet out from the fire place. The phrase is "the trap is sprung."

Once someone gets close to the fire place, the whisper is heard and the fire suddenly dies out. The spirit of Stephan leaps into the stuffed drake and it suddenly roars with life. All of the animal heads also become alive, though all they do is bleat, roar and howl (to no actual game effect, though it is eerie as hell). The beast will now try to destroy the PCs it has cornered in this chamber.

The Stuffed Beast CR 5

XP 1,600
Male zombie rift drake
NE Large undead dragon (earth)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (+2 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size)
hp 71 (13d8+13)
Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8
DR 5/slashing; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (clumsy)
Melee bite +16 (2d8+8/19-20), tail slap +10 (1d10+4 plus trip)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

TACTICS

During Combat This creature is animated by the will of Stephan and attacks at his behest. It charges and bites again and again until it is subdued.

Morale The animated zombie drake fights to the death

STATISTICS

Str 27, **Dex** 15, **Con** -, **Int** -, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10
Base Atk +9; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 29
Feats Toughness
Languages Draconic
SQ staggered

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Staggered (Ex) Zombies have poor reflexes and can only perform a single move action or standard action each round. A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round as a charge action.

11. Empty Room

This large and suspiciously empty room obviously once contained many pieces of furniture thanks to the marks on the floor, but now contains nothing. There are two imposing sets of double doors on the east and western wall. The eastern door has words scratched into its finish. "Without the eyes of fire, you shall never reach the tower's treasury alive".

This "riddle" is actually a sort of trap. Touching the jeweled ruby amulets in the room beyond (12.) activates a fire trap and hopefully, the intruders will fight amongst themselves to claim these trinkets because of this riddle.

The secret door in the south-eastern wall is not too difficult to find (DC 20) if it is searched for and it is activated by a pushing a slightly discolored brick.

12. Tower Stairwell

This chamber is a large rounded room with a grand stairway leading up to the second level of the tower. In the northwest and south west corners are two man-sized statues of wizards that look ready to cast spells. Each wears a ruby amulet (worth 100 gp) made of brass made into the shape of a burning eye. These amulets are not magical and have no use in this tower.

However, the statues are trapped. Anyone who reaches for the amulet receives a blast of flame. Both amulets are trapped, so there are potentially two identical blasts of flame to be activated here.

Wizard Statues CR 3

Type magical; **Perception** DC 26; **Disable Device** DC 26

EFFECTS

Trigger someone touches for a jewelled amulet worn by the statues; **Reset** none
Effects spell effect (*burning hands*, 5d4 fire damage; DC 11 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets in a 15-ft. cone)

13. Tower Room

This chamber is dark, save for a pale green luminescence emanating from a trail of glowing foot prints (the trail) that connects the secret door to the normal door. Anyone who enters the chamber activates a magic mouth that whispers "He who would claim my family's wealth must follow in my footsteps..." Of course, this is a trap. Anyone who follows the instructions finds that about half through the glowing trail, there is rune on the path. The rune is stepped on (and it on a foot print), the trap is activated. There is nothing here of any value.

Lightning Arc CR 2

Type magical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger someone walks the path; **Reset** none
Effects electricity arc (4d6 electricity damage, DC 20 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets along foot path)

2nd Floor

14. Landing and Hallway

The stairs from the Grand Ballroom (4.) stop here and lead to an L-shaped hallway, ten feet across going forty feet west and seventy feet south. The hallway is empty but as the minions first come up to this level, there is soft ominous laughter that echoes through the hall. "Stay for while..." can also be softly heard. These events, though perhaps unnerving, are not themselves dangerous.

15. Guest Bedroom

This room was never emptied of its furnishings and contains a bed (north-west corner), wardrobe (south-west corner) and desk with chair (south-east corner). There is also a locked shuttered window in the center of the west wall. The furnishings are of common manufacture and not particularly valuable nor remarkable.

16. Guest Bedroom

This is another guest bedroom similar to 15. above. There is a bed in the northeast corner, a wardrobe in the southeastern corner, desk with chair in the southwestern corner and large chest in the northwestern corner.

17. Guest Bedroom

Identical to 15. above.

18. Guest Bedroom

Identical to 16. above.

19. Guest Bedroom

Identical to 15. above.

20. Guest Bedroom

At first glance this room is identical to 16. above. However beneath the bed is the lair of a particularly large and cantankerous hissing cockroach sometimes known as Skitters. The roach made off his Stephan's right leg and the skeletal remains of it are beneath the bed. Anyone who reaches under that bed will get bitten and the roach will emerge to defend its home.

Skitters, the angry Hissing Cockroach — **CR 1**

XP 400
hp 19 (see the giant hissing cockroach entry in the Bestiary 2)

21. Guest Bedroom

Identical to 15. above.

22. Larger Guest Bedroom

This is a larger more ornate version of the other guest rooms. There is a double bed in the southeastern corner, desks in the southwestern and northeastern corners, wardrobes in the center south and north walls. Two windows on the south wall are locked and shuttered.

23. Larger Guest Bedroom

This is similar to 22. above.

24. Executioner's Chamber

This trapped room is where Stephan met his untimely end. His rotten, desiccated torso and arms are here still. What decapitated him is a wicked swinging blade trap. The three blades are launched forward by a tightly coiled spring and a clockwork mechanism resets it 1d4+2 rounds later. A stone block stops the blades. The trap is on a hair trigger and activates whenever any weight is put on the floor. This room is completely dark.

The trap is easily enough avoided if you just know it is there. Throwing anything that weighs a few pounds up through the trap door sets it off and then there is plenty of time to get past it or for a skilled thief to even disable it if they don't dawdle.

Stephan's Bane (the Swinging Blades) — **CR 3**

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** automatic (1d4+2 rounds)
Effects Three Atk +10 melee (scythe; 2d4+4/×4)

25. The "Treasure" Chamber

This completely dark room, at first glance, presents the appearance of being a hidden treasure chamber. However, if the PCs have learned anything, it is that nothing in this house is benevolent. And so it is with this chamber.

There is a single large chest, obviously old, with an incredibly crude and simple lock (DC 10 to open) with a very large keyhole. However, the chest is filled not with treasure, but with cunningly made clockwork bees. These bees sit perfectly silent until the check is opened, when they erupt any attack anything moving nearby. However, this trap has a flaw and clever PCs might be able to exploit this. If a light source is held up to the keyhole you can see inside the chest and see the dozens of neatly folded clockwork bees waiting to explode out and attack (it requires a DC 15 Perception check to make out the bees if the PC says he's trying to look through the keyhole).

The chest is heavy (150 lbs) but moveable. The PCs could position this chest anywhere and unleash the swarm either by attaching a rope to the lid or by simply hiding behind the large chest. This means the bees could be unleashed against other foes. In particular, these bees are too small for the stone golem to hurt (they are immune to weapon damage). However, their little stingers are made of adamantine (and thus ignore the golem's DR). Thus they will slowly whittle the golem down (it will take an average of 31 rounds). Of course, while this is happening the golem will be swinging wildly and doing massive collateral damage to anything nearby.

Clockwork Swarm	CR 4

XP 1,200
N Diminutive construct (swarm)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 natural, +2 size)
hp 42 (4d10+20); self repair 3 (acid, cold, fire)
Fort +1; **Ref** +3; **Will** +2
Immune construct traits, swarm traits
Weaknesses swarm traits

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.
Melee swarm (1d6)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Special Attacks adamantine stingers, distraction (DC 12)

TACTICS

During Combat The swarm has little intelligence. It attacks the nearest enemy, swarming foes as many as possible.

Morale The swarm fights to the death after the chest is opened.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12
Base Atk +4; **CMB** — ; **CMD** —
Skills Stealth +2 (+6 when not moving); Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth when not moving

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Self-Repair (Ex) A clockwork swarm regains 3 hit points per round. Damage dealt from acid, cold, or fire effects cannot be self-repaired. If a clockwork swarm takes damage from an area attack, it is unable to repair itself for 1d6 rounds following the attack. If reduced to 0 or less hit points, it regains 1 hit point per round (but still cannot repair damage caused by acid, cold, or fire effects) until it has at least 1 hit point (at which time it begins to self-repair at its normal rate of 3 hit points per round).

2nd Tower Level

26. 2nd story Tower Stairwell

This room once housed family heirlooms and displays of past glories. Now it's empty save for two stairways and a door along the western wall. However, this is also where the stone golem that defends this house came to a stop after slaying a group of previous intruders. It rests against the center of the west wall, waiting for new orders. As soon as the PCs enter, it receives them. A low ominous whisper comes out of nowhere. It says "We have guests, my servant. Show them what aid their evil god can offer them. Crush them!" With that, the golem animates and attacks. See advice for defeating the golem on page 78.

27. The Roomful of Corpses

This is horrid bloody room is full of corpses slain by the golem. There are seven corpses here but eight heads (the extra is Stefan's in a sack). For how it got here, see page 70. None of the pitiful victims' gear has survived the golem's rough handling.

28. Storage Room

This is a room filled with boxes, barrels, furniture and other clutter. There is a wooden coffin hidden amongst the boxes perfect for laying Stephan's body to rest and thus removing the power of him over this place. It can be found with a DC 15 Perception check.

Stone Golem	CR 11

XP 12,800
N Large construct
Init –1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 8, flat-footed 26 (–1 Dex, +18 natural, –1 size)
hp 107 (14d10+30)
Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4
DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.
Melee 2 slams +22 (2d10+9)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

TACTICS

During Combat The golem snashes intruders and obey the whispered orders of the ghostly housemaster. That's what it does.

Morale The golem fights to the death to obey its order.

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1
Base Atk +14; **CMB** +24; **CMD** 33

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Immunity to Magic (Ex) A stone golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A *transmute rock to mud* spell slows a stone golem (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw, while *transmute mud to rock* heals all of its lost hit points.

A *stone to flesh* spell does not actually change the golem's structure but negates its damage reduction and immunity to magic for 1 full round.

3rd Tower Level

29. 3rd Story Tower Stairwell

The stairway from below terminates here. Once tapestries hung on the wall, but those are all gone now.

30. Master Bedroom

Stephan intended to pack this room up after he finished trapping the house (he slept here after all), but he died before it was done. As a result, this room remains fully furnished. There is a massive four-post bed with bed-side tables, a wardrobe holding a few sets of noble clothing (Stephan's garments worth 100 gp), and a fine rug weighing 200 lbs but worth 1000 gp. Two finely made guardian knight statues attend the room. The northernmost statue's shield opens revealing a safe (Perception DC 20 to find). The safe is all but impossible to crack (DC 40) but clever PCs may deduce the combination (7-3-1) from the family motto. Inside is the deed to this manor and 100,000 gp in bank notes redeemable here in Matharyn.

31. Master Bath

Once an opulent bathroom, this room is now empty of anything remarkable.

32. Master Closet

This vast walk-in closet contains shelves enough to hang a large wardrobe. However it is now empty.

Basement

33. Basement Entry

The trapdoor in the ceiling leads down to this dark and empty room via a stone ladder. The basement is Stephan's masterpiece of lethality. He completely remodeled it to lure intruders to their doom. As the PCs enter here the first time, a whispering voice speaks "Ah, you've found the basement. You'll like it here." The voice trails off into an ominous laugh. Otherwise, this room is empty.

34. Welcome Chamber

This seemingly empty room conceals not one but three traps. Three spring loaded spears hidden in the north wall fire if the PCs step on the wrong tiles. The trigger tiles are all similar, so once you've found one the other two are comparatively easy to spot (+5 to Perception checks after the first.)

Spring Loaded Spear Trap (3)	CR 2

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** manual
Effects Atk +15 ranged (spear; 1d6+6)

35. Hallway

This is an empty stone hallway free of traps or dangers. The voice speaks "The last was too easy. The next one requires cleverness". Again the ominous laughter returns.

36. Room of the Three Riddles

This room is safe enough until you try to leave through the door in the northeastern wall. There are three stone projections each with an inscription that glows with a faint magic light, each shining a different color.

The first inscription (red): "Everyone sees me most every day. I work their fields but never for pay."

The second inscription (blue): "Always ancient but sometimes new. Always the same but sometimes blue."

The third inscription (white): "We're the children of the greatest sea; I'm never reached, still you sail to me."

The answers are in order sun, moon and stars. If those three words are spoken in the room, the inscription dims. If any inscription glows when the north-eastern door is opened, the trap activates. If none of the riddles are answered, then all three traps discharge simultaneously. If all three riddles are solve a key (to 41) appears by the exit.

Energy Blasts (3)	CR 2

Type magical; **Perception** -; **Disable Device** DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger opening the door without answering a riddle; **Reset** automatic (every day)
Effects energy blast (4d6 fire [red], cold [blue] or electricity [white] damage, DC 20 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets everyone in the room

37. Hallway

An empty stone hallway. "You must think you're clever to have gotten so far. The next chamber will be your doom!" No laughter this time.

38. Chamber of Blades

This chamber is full of swinging axe blades hidden in the walls. Every five feet there is another slashing blade set off by pressure plates in the floor (so the entire floor is covered by these traps). The room can be meticulously crossed by disabling the four pressure plates (each one five feet wide and ten feet across) or someone can simply run across it at top speed. A DC 15 Dexterity test means the runner is quick enough to avoid the blades, which do take a moment to activate. Of course if anyone is right behind the runner, they receive all four attacks.

Slashing Axe Blades	CR 1

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** automatic (1d4+2 rounds)
Effects Atk +10 melee (axe; 1d8+1/×3); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft. line from the north wall to the south)

39. Trapped Hallway

A seemingly empty stone hallway. "You'd best turn back! Nothing but death waits ahead!" The voice now seems almost desperate. Just in front of the door however is a concealed pit trap. If anyone falls in the pit trap, the voice mocks "See, I told you so."

If the stone golem comes down here and Stephan still controls it, he knows the pit trap is here and the golem stops at its edge. The golem then presses a hidden button in the wall beside the pit that deactivates the mechanism (DC 30 to find this hidden button) and crosses the pit. If the golem is not under Stephan's control it simply plows into the trap. Even if it has avoided it before, the golem has no memory.

Hidden Pit Trap	CR 3

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** manual
Effects 50-ft. deep pit (5d6 falling damage); DC 20 Reflex avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

40. Chamber of the stone Golem

This was once an old storage chamber and it was here that the golem was found. The golem once was stationed here and this is where of one the missing three groups met their gory end. The golem (acting under orders from Stephan's ghost), climbed out the stone ladder in 33, dumped their corpses in a hole in the back yard and covered it up. Still everywhere there are tell-tale signs of dried blood and crusty viscera. If the PCs are being chased by the stone golem (from 26), this is where their chase ends. This is a dead end (quite literally probably).

41. Another "treasure" Chamber

This small chamber is really little more than a walled-in closet behind a locked door labelled "Treasure Chamber". Inside sits a single chest that is both locked and trapped. Both the door and the chest are locked by the same key (DC 30 to pick, the key is found in 36). Clever PCs by now will realize that there is no treasure in this room. This entire house is a bear trap sat by the spirit that haunts their every move. But greed may drive them on regardless.

If they open the chest, it explodes releasing a fireball. Stephan could not test this trap and in truth it is too destructive. It blasts through the basement roof and sets the house's superstructure aflame. It would take a bucket brigade of more than a hundred men to have any chance of fighting this fire. There is little the PCs can do but watch the house burn down and escape from Harynvale Manor.

Fireball Trap CR 5

Type magical; **Perception** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger opening the chest; **Reset** none
Effects spell effect (fireball, 6d6 fire damage, DC 14 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets in a 20-ft.-radius burst)

Destroying the Stone Golem

The stone golem begins in Room 26 (see above) and plods after the PCs moving through the house. Even though it is large, it can squeeze through doors (sometimes even breaking through for dramatic effect; it does have a 28 Strength score). It can also negotiate stone stairs, though they count as difficult terrain for the monster. It can even negotiate trapdoors, in the sense that it can rip them off and fall down them, taking little damage.

One glance at its statistics should reveal that the PCs have zero chance against the golem. Even though this old golem lacks a magical *slow* attack, it is still far too formidable for them to take down. They can barely hurt it and to have a chance to do so, they have to get inside its reach, exposing them to its devastating slam attacks. And once engaged, the minions won't last long against a creature that does an average of 40 hp damage a round.

So what can the PCs do against this golem? The best way to destroy it is to lure the creature to the pit trap in 39. If the golem falls down the pit, it will be permanently trapped at the bottom of the pit. The pit is fifty feet deep and the walls of the pit are not near strong enough to support this weight. As the golem digs into the wall and try to lift itself, it will only succeed in burying itself in debris, entombing itself in broken bits of stonework. The clockwork bees (in 25) can also destroy the creature with their thousand adamantine stings.

Failing that the PCs may try some other tricks to destroy the golem. The golem, for example is too heavy to go up the grand staircase in the Grand Ballroom if some of the supports are torn away. This will cause the creature to fall twenty feet (taking 2d6 damage) and temporarily bury it in debris. But this is only a temporary solution.

The essential part of any plan is to deal with Stephan's ghost. As long as the ghost persists, the golem stays with the manor house and occasionally receives new orders. Without Stephan, the golem can be lead out of the house. If the PCs can get the golem for example to the River Danyth, the heavy stone golem will sink into the muck at the bottom of the so-called Lake and be stuck there forever. It could even be led to the Old Palace to their masters who will destroy the intruder in short order. Wherever they lure the sluggish golem, it is no longer in the house. They weren't told to make Matharyn safe. They were told to clear the house and make it ready for their masters. And if the minions can't take the hint and do continue to fight the golem directly, don't be afraid of a total party kill. All that means is that group number four of minions is soon activated and sent in to investigate what is going on in Harynvale manor. The adventure continues!

The Fall of the House of Harynvale

With the Ghost of Stephan Harynvale (hopefully) laid to rest and the golem smashed, trapped in a pit or ripped apart by bees, the minions have actually accomplished their vague and ill-defined mission. Greed may cause them to seek the "treasure" in room 41. Detonating the fireball dooms the house. The fireball blows out the floor of the 1st level. The Grand Ballroom (4) and the Empty Room (11) are soon engulfed in flame. Once those rooms are burning, it becomes impossible to save the house. In thirty minutes, the house burns to the ground.

If the minions manage to get out with the deed and the 100,000 gp in bank notes from the safe (in room 30), they must face a moral dilemma: steal the money or turn them over to the bosses? Ultimately, the minions are a bunch of evil-doers. 100,000 gp may prove too much of a temptation. Certainly it may prove enough of a temptation that the minions turn on each other. However it turns out, let every player have a chance to say what they do (or try to do) with this massive treasure.Of course, the treasure is likely to eventually end up in the hands of the villains. And that's fine. They'll be 18th or 19th level ruling a kingdom by the time they receive the 100,000 gp. This treasure is not out of line for them. It is basically the carrot for making it through this house full of capricious murder. If the PCs manage to deliver the treasure the villains laud them with high praise.

"Adequate".

Troubleshooting MinionQuest

Do you really expect a bunch of guys with three levels of NPC classes to slay a hydra/manticore/stone golem/etc.?

No. Your players get to fight plenty of fair, mechanically balanced combats in the normal "Way of the Wicked" campaign. MinionQuest is all about doomed underlings facing ridiculous odds and maybe just maybe surviving through luck, pluck and guile.

Wait! _______ isn't funny. I thought you said this would be funny!

Comedy is a very subjective business and if you didn't find the hapless adventures of our minions at least a little funny, well ... sorry. When running the game, the most important advice for keeping it humorous is to keep the action going. Getting bogged down in shopping, preparation, etc. is definitely not funny. Instead, playtesting has shown these adventures work best at a breakneck pace. The minions' masters can always be there to apply pressure and demand that the job be done right now! The players may want to wait a day or two more, but do they dare risk the wrath of their wicked masters?

Should MinionQuest affect your normal "Way of the Wicked" campaign?

If you are running these three adventures as side-trek diversions from a normal "Way of the Wicked" campaign, the answer is a definite 'yes'. Any monsters the minions capture, any treasure they turn in, and the fact that they can potentially capture the Duke of Daveryn all can impact the regular campaign.

This is not a bad thing. The rewards are, in the great scope of things, small. These side treks solve none of the PCs larger problems. Instead, these adventures give our villains a chance for a single session to see how their poor minions get by (or don't) and earning small rewards will hopefully make everyone feel they aren't wasting their time.

My players want to kill Grumblejack now.

Yeah, that's fair. The hope of this GM is that the players as villains so love Grumblejack, that the players as minions will tolerate his relentless and even gleeful abuse. But if they do conspire to kill him and somehow succeed (no easy task with his flight, damage output and damage reduction), then so be it.

Of course, the villains likely have the resources to raise him again, so the PCs may get caught in the unusual situation of both killing and raising their own ogre minion. Good times to be sure!

Grumblejack is already dead before MinionQuest I even begins!

Grumblejack is not essential and easily replaced. He can be replaced by any large powerful cohort or the leader of the PCs evil organization or even by a PC who happens to like to manage the minions directly. The most important thing to keep in mind for his replacement is that he should be a lot more powerful than any individual minion. After all, if he is to bully your minions into very dangerous and unwise actions, he needs to be powerful enough to enforce his will.

Wait! I want my villains to capture Duke Martin, not these minions.

Okay, then don't have it be Duke Martin hiding out at Slambam Sam's. It could be any one else the villains are earnestly searching for (perhaps someone who they would want revenge from the past who could conceivably be in Daveryn). Or it could be the hiding Cardinal of Daveryn. Or it could a servant of Duke Martin who can provide a vital clue to where the actual duke is hiding. The choice is yours.

Can my PCs just burn down Harynvale Manor?

This directly disobeys their orders, so they can expect to get in massive trouble with their overlords. Still, they can try. But Harynvale Manor is primarily made of stone and has a ghost protector who may somehow be able to extinguish flames. But the real reason to thwart this plan is that watching a house full of traps burn is no fun and not a challenge.

I want more MinionQuest adventures! What can I do to make more of these?

Well, you'll have to fill in the details of course, but minions could play a role in Book Three. You could have the adventures of the minions in the Vale of Valtaerna. Perhaps it falls to them to make sure that no one escapes to report back to the King about the terrible tragedy that has befallen this holy place. And of course they fail. So the real mission is hiding their failure from their masters before it gets them killed.

In Book Five, the minions could be sent to Ghastenhall to try to join up with the Princess' resistance network and find out what this paragon of virture is up to. This gives the minions the chance to try and pretend to be good guys. In order to get into the good-aligned resistance they have to prove their devotion to both Mitra and the principles of good and niceness. There is much potential for comedy there. The part of the abusive boss can be filled by Barnabus Thrain.

MinionQuest Pregen Characters

The Thug

Human warrior 3
LE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +0; **Senses** Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor)
hp 33 (3d10+12)
Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft (30 ft. out of armor)
Melee great sword +7 (2d6+6/19-20) or
great sword power attack +6 (2d6+9/19-20) or
padded club +7 (1d6+4 nonlethal)
Ranged dagger +3 (1d4+4/19-20)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10
Base Atk +3; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 17
Feats Cleave, Power Attack, Toughness
Skills Climb +10, Intimidate +7
Languages Common
Trait Bully - +1 to Intimidate
Gear great sword, splint mail, 3 daggers, padded club, backpack, 6 lbs. of sausage (i.e. lunch), 12 gp, rugged leather clothing, gang colors head scarf, pretty flower (hidden)

ROLEPLAYING

Hurting people ... some people have tried to tell you its wrong. Usually they've told you this in between begging for their own life or swearing that they would get you the money they owed your boss because of last week's horse race. Whatever. Anyways, what do they know?

You never really bought it. If hurting people is wrong, why is it so much fun? Anyways after years of breaking knee caps and part-time mugging and collecting gambling debts for loan sharks (and let's not forget beating people up recreationally), you've finally made a step up in the world. You now belong to a cult.

You don't really understand what the cult believes in exactly. They seem to think that Elmodius or Asmosteus or something like that is better than Mitra. Whatever. You have no idea what that means. All you know is that you now belong to a bigger, more powerful gang than ever. It's time to shine and prove your worth in this new gang.

And by shine, you mean hurting people.

Personality

You are the quintessential bully. When you want something, it's simple. Find someone weaker than you and punch them in the face until they give you what you want. What could be easier than that?

Complicated arguments that involve lots of talking just confuse you. And when you get confused, you get violent. Of course, now that you mention it, even when you aren't confused, you are still fairly violent.

However, you are not just a mindless brute. You have a soft, sentimental side. You hate to show it to people, because you are sure they won't understand and make fun of you. But the sound of music or a pretty flower can sometimes cause you to stop and contemplate what it means. Such reveries never last long, though. Soon something snaps you back to the here and now. And then you are back to business.

And by business, you mean hurting people.

The Aristocrat

Half-elven aristocrat 3
LE Medium humanoid (half-elf)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 armor)
hp 20 (3d8+3)
Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3; +2 vs. enchantments
Immune sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft
Melee mwk rapier +6 (1d6+1/18-20)
Ranged dagger +5 (1d4+1/19-20)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14
Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 16
Feats Deceitful, Skill Focus (bluff), Weapon Finesse
Skills Bluff +14, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +8, Disguise +10, Knowledge (nobility) +5, Perception +8, Sense Motive +5 **Racial** +2 Perception
Languages Common, Celestial, Elven
Trait Convincing Liar - +1 to Bluff checks
Gear masterwork rapier, mithral chain shirt (both of which are family heirlooms you will NOT be selling), noble clothing, fabulous hat, signet ring, 4 daggers, disguise kit, 43 gp

ROLEPLAYING

It is so painfully obvious that you should be in charge of this motley little band that you find it almost embarrassing to point out. Of course, you should be in charge. Certainly none of the rest of these thugs and rapscallions are worthy to lead.

You have joined this ... cult, cabal, conspiracy ... whatever you want to call it for several reasons. First and foremost, Talingarde sucks. This whole country has almost no decent night life. Once this country was ruled by enlightened people who were obviously smarter because they were related to you.Things were much better back then.

The other reason you joined was for good old fashioned personal power. Someone with your proclivities and ambitions has zero chance of making a name for themselves amongst the goody goodies who rule country nowadays. At least with the Asmodeans you have a chance of making your mark. When your masters rise to power, then you rise as well.

So be sure to impress them with your talent and savoir-faire. Take credit for every scheme that works and distance yourself from any failures. Don't be afraid to frame your fellow minions if it gains you favor with your overlords.

Personality

Some people like to accuse the aristocracy of being arrogant, haughty, stuck up, elitist, snobbish, decadent, lazy, cowardly, deceitful, treacherous and untrustworthy. And you are all those things and more. You are exactly the sort of noble who gives other nobles a bad name. You try to keep track of your vices, but really who has time for that kind of bookkeeping?

Always act like you are better than your fellow minions (because honestly you are). Always act like you know exactly what is going even when you have no clue. Do not risk your own life unless there is no other choice. Have no qualms about your endangering your fellows for even the smallest personal gains (or perhaps even your own amusement).

Oh, yes ... and lie. A lot. About everything. About who you are. Why you're here. What you're doing. Lie lie lie. Lie to anyone you meet. Lie to your overlords (though cautiously). And certainly lie to your fellow minions. They have it coming.

The Criminal

Human rogue 1/expert 2
LE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +8; **Senses** Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +2 armor)
hp 20 (3d8+3)
Fort +1, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft
Melee short sword +5 (1d6+1/19-20) or dagger +5 (1d4+1/19-20)
Ranged short bow +5 (1d6/x3)
Special Attack sneak attack (1d6)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11
Base Atk +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 16
Feats Deft Hands, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse
Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +5, Climb +7, Disable Device +13 (+15 with your mwk tools), Knowledge (local) +4, Perception +7, Sense Motive +5, Sleight of Hand +12, Stealth +10
Languages Common
Trait Criminal - +1 to Disable Device
SQ trapfinding
Gear short sword, short bow, 40 arrows, dagger, leather armor, masterwork thieves tools, 17 gp, stolen badge of the town watch labelled Kowalsky (illegal to possess but useful; +2 to Bluff and Disguise rolls to impersonate town watch), 50 ft. of hemp rope and a grapple hook

ROLEPLAYING

You've been breaking the law since … well, since always. Heck, as you were being born, you picked the midwife's pocket. It's your profession, it's your calling and it's all you are good at. As long as you can remember you wanted to be a part of a powerful organization that could make your dreams come true and you wanted to work with a crack crew who could pull off any job imaginable.

Maybe this is your chance. There is no doubt these Asmodean types are serious business. You've seen your bosses whack a guy just for asking too many questions. But a lot of their minions seem like real chuckleheads. Maybe you can work with a few of these knuckledraggers to get head in the gang. But you've got zero problem selling out your so-called friends if it can get you ahead. Your real loyalty is only to yourself and to the leaders of the gang. Your bosses you fear and respect. Only a fool would betray them. But don't let any other minion tell you that you have to do something stupid or suicidal.

Personality

You are a jaded child of the streets who has managed to escape the harsh realities of such a life and become an accomplished criminal with a very valuable skill. There are few locks and traps you can't break given a few moments. Your tools are your most valued possession. Never let them out of your sight.

You put forward the front of being a calm, cool, calloused professional lawbreaker. You have little time for those you see as idiotic or unprofessional. But of course the truth is that for all your airs about being the consummate professional, you are bit of an idiot yourself. For all that you pretend to have seen it all, the truth is that you are a rookie as much as any of your fellow minions. And you do have one sizeable weakness: greed. There is little you won't do to acquire monetary wealth.

Always remember though, that you are a thief who is a member of a gang or mob. Don't let anyone tell you that this is a cult. All that religious mumbo jumbo is just a cover. Anyone who doesn't understand that is a fool and best ignored.

The Cultist

Human adept 3
LE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +0; **Senses** Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor)
hp 22 (3d6+9)
Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft
Melee heavy mace +3 (1d8+2)

Adept Spells Prepared (CL 3rd)
1st—*burning hands (DC 14), cure light wounds x2*
0—*detect magic, guidance, stabilize*

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 12
Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13
Feats Armor Proficiency (light), Skill Focus (Heal), Toughness
Skills Heal +11, Knowledge (religion) +6, Linguistics +0
Languages Common, Infernal
Trait Indomitable Faith - +1 to Will saves
Gear silver unholy symbol of Asmodeus, chain shirt, heavy mace, sacred sacrificial dagger,healing kit (10 uses), thumb screws (torture implement), 22 gp, backpack, bedroll, 5 days of trail rations, water skin, lantern, 2 flasks of oil, flint and tinder, *potion of cure light wounds*

ROLEPLAYING

Hail Asmodeus!

Many of the minions you work with don't fully understand that they are actually members of an Asmodean cult. You don't just understand that, you revel in it. You have learned to speak the tongue of devils. You can call forth devil fire (i.e. cast burning hands) at least once per day. With a word you can give people the infernal aid of the devil god! What could be cooler than that? It's great to a be a member of a devil cult!

Before this your life was a big pile of nothing. You were being trained to be a minor member of the Mitran clergy with no real prospects of ever attaining any real rank. This is so much cooler! Let's bring on the evil!

Basically you are a groupie of darkness. You worship your dark masters and will do anything to please them. You ache to learn more of the sacred mysteries of hell. Unfortunately, you are not the deepest thinker and many of the subtleties of your faith escape you, but what does that matter?

You do your best to serve your dark masters both on this plane and in hell. And set a lot of things on fire, because that's fun too.

Personality

They say that there is no fanatic to equal a recent convert and that certainly describes you. You've only been a part of this cult for a few weeks and are eager to get deeper in! You are always eager to try new magic and find new ways to show your devotion.

Whenever any of your fellow minions express any doubt or hesitancy about serving Asmodeus, be sure to try to lure them further down the dark path. You like to think of yourself as some silver tongued devil, but the truth is that there are other members of you band of minions more charismatic than you.

But while other may be stronger than you, more charismatic than you and certainly smarter than you, no one is more enthusiastic than you. You are a servant of evil! What could possibly be more fun than that?

The Kid

Human rogue 3 (knife master)
LE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +4; **Senses** Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +2 armor)
hp 23 (3d8+6)
Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft
Melee dagger +7 (1d4+1/19-20)
Ranged dagger +7 (1d4+1/19-20)
Special Attack sneak attack (2d8 with daggers, 2d4 with anything else)

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14
Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 17
Feats Stealthy, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (dagger)
Skills Acrobatics +10, Bluff +8, Climb +7, Escape Artist +12, Knowledge (local) +6, Perception +6, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +10 (+15 to conceal a small blade), Stealth +12
Languages Common
Trait Orphan - +1 to Fortitude saves
SQ blade sense (+1 dodge bonus to AC against small blades), evasion, hidden blade +1, rogue talent (underhanded 2/day)
Gear 9 daggers (hidden all over you), leather armor, 6 sp

ROLEPLAYING

Only a couple of weeks ago, you were an urchin on the streets struggling to find food. Today you are up and coming member of a gang of Asmodeus worshippers and have just celebrated your sixteenth birthday (making you technically an adult). But you are still fairly short and often mistaken for being a child several years younger. And that's your edge. They never see you coming.

You are easily the most junior of the minions, but also perhaps the most talented. You have almost no money or gear, and whatever the mission, would really like to score some cash. But more than that you are seeking a place to belong and are eager to prove yourself. This is your chance to make a name for yourself!

Personality

You are a typical sixteen year old punk. You don't like taking orders. You think you know everything. And you especially hate it when someone belittles your ideas just because you're young. You didn't survive all this time on the streets by being stupid!

In some ways you are jaded veteran of the streets. You've seen all manner of wickedness. But by other measures, you are a fresh faced youngster, inexperienced in the ways of the world.

Do Minions Level up?

Generally, the answer is no. These low-level nobodies simply don't have the potential to gain more levels. After all, these are not the heroes or villains of a story. Instead they are the extras given briefly a chance to shine.

Still, if you want the minions to improve, you can give them one more NPC level or let them keep one piece of choice gear between sessions. That way the players still feel a sense of progress while keeping the minions the low-level screw-ups that make these missions entertaining.

The Archer

Human warrior 3
NE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +4; **Senses** Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +4 Dex)
hp 24 (3d10+3)
Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft
Melee short sword +5 (1d6+2/19-20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +9 (1d8+2/x3)

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 18, **Con** 10, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8
Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 19
Feats Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (Longbow)
Skills Climb +8, Stealth +11, Perception +3
Languages Common
Trait Bandit - +1 to Stealth and Stealth is a class skill
Gear mwk composite longbow (+2 Str) named "Darla", leather **armor**, 80 arrows, short sword, backpack, 5 days trail rations, 13 gp, bedroll, waterskin, flint and steel, 50 ft. of hemp rope

ROLEPLAYING

You've spent most of your professional "career" being a bandit specialized in ambushing caravans. But those days seem largely behind you now. Your gang was "recruited" when your former leader was slain, rather explosively, by your new masters. Honestly, you care nothing about their politics, their cause or their religion.

You've never loved Talingarde certainly, but the idea of trying to change it seems like a fool's errand. But, wow, there is no denying these guys are powerful. You've decided to fall in line. Yeah, like you had a choice.

At least they seem to recognize you for the master craftsman of death that you are. You have a real talent for putting arrows into people. You are a solid bowman honed by years of good old fashioned banditry. You can put an arrow between the eyes of a caravan guard at a hundred yards without even working up a sweat. That's your bread and butter.

Your favorite tactic is to climb to a quiet high vantage point, hide there and snipe anyone who might interfere with the business at hand. What you have no interest in is anything resembling the so-called "fair fight". Some insist these sorts of fights are an honorable activity. To you, they've always just seemed like an activity only fools engage in. Ambushes are definitely the way to go.

Your most prized and irreplaceable possession is, of course, your longbow. It's worth hundreds of gold on the market, but in truth to your its priceless. Without it, you are out of a job. Anyone messing with your bow immediately earns your ire.

Personality

Many people describe you as grim, sullen and humorless. And that's what the people who like you say. A more typical reaction is that murderer with the bow. And that is honestly a fair assessment. You say little, preferring to let your bow do the talking when arguments arise.

But despite your grim and stoic demeanor, you do have a strong sense of loyalty. You recognize you cannot combat the world alone. You need allies and your fellow minions are, gods help you, probably the best shot you've got at prospering. You only pray that when the masters rant and rave about making Talingarde pay and taking over the kingdom that they aren't completely mad and have a plan that might work.

The Bad Cop

Human rogue 1/warrior 2
LE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+1 Dex, +7 armor, +3 shield)
hp 29 (d8+2d10 + 9)
Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft (30 ft. out of armor)
Melee mwk longsword +7 (1d8+3/19-20) or
dagger +5 (1d4+3/19-20)
Ranged hvy crossbow +3 (1d10/19-20)
Special Attack sneak attack (1d6)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 12, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 12
Base Atk +2; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 16
Feats Shield Focus, Toughness, Weapon Focus (Longsword)
Skills Appraise +5, Bluff +5, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +5, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +7, Perception +7, Sense Motive +7 (+9 ito receive a hunch in social situations), Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +7
Languages Common, Dwarven
Trait Law Enforcer - +2 to Sense Motive in social situations, has a set of mwk manacles
SQ trapfinding
Gear masterwork longsword, dagger, splint mail, heavy steel shield, heavy crossbow, 20 bolts, masterwork manacles, 24 gp, Farholde city watch tabard (technically illegal to own, but add +2 to disguise check to pretend to be a watchman when worn)

ROLEPLAYING

You've been a bad cop since day one. You've taken bribes. You've looked the other way for cash. You've tipped off scum bags and sold out ongoing investigations. And that is just the tip of the iceberg. You've done worse. A lot worse.

But a few months ago. It all came crashing down. You were drummed out of the watch in disgrace and only avoided a lengthy jail term because your friendship with some powerful people. Now, those friends are gone. But fortunately, you've made new ones.

Lately, you've joined a particularly ruthless criminal syndicate and have become a foot soldier enforcing the will of the mob bosses. You've heard rumors that this syndicate is also some kind of cult with aims to topple the House of Darius and install a new state religion or some other similar goals. You know nothing about that kind of stuff and frankly, as long as the gold keeps coming in, you don't care.

The bosses may be crazy, but there is one thing you are certain of. They are amongst the most powerful people you've ever met. You've heard one of them can kill people just by looking at them. Double cross them at your peril.

Personality

You are a big friendly person with a broad smile and an easy going nature about you. You are the sort of person that is easy to speak to and good to know. At least, that is the image you project. The truth is that you one merciless, ruthless rat who will do anything to get ahead and stay out of prison.

You act like a nice folksy fellow, but when the moment comes you are ready to strike with lead-pipe cruelty. Mercy is not due the enemy.

But for all of that cruelty, you also recognize that cooperation is key to succeeding at any mission. You and your fellow minions must work together if you are to get ahead in your new job.

The Farmer Who Is In Over HIs Head

Human commoner 4
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2; **Senses** Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +2 Dex)
hp 32 (4d6+16)
Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft
Melee spear +6 (1d8+6/x3) or
unarmed +6 (1d3+5)
Ranged spear+4 (1d8+4/x3)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10
Base Atk +2; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 18
Feats Armor Proficiency (light), Improved Unarmed Strike, Toughness
Skills Handle Animal +7, Profession (farmer) +7
Languages Common
Trait Heavy Hitter - +1 trait bonus to unarmed damage
Gear 2 spears, leather armor, shoes with hole in heel, 5 cp, home made satchel, 5 lbs. of assorted vegetable stolen from Farmer MacCullen's field

ROLEPLAYING

How did you get here?

Not long ago, you were a country boy working on a turnip farm just outside of the utterly forgettable township of Grover's Hollow. Then your farmed got burned and your family got killed by bugbears.

You went to the nearest city looking for work and fell in with a bad crowd and now ... here you are a member of some sort of evil cult or gang or something. Really, you have no idea what this group is actually about. You just know that if you don't follow orders you are going to be in trouble.

They seem to like you. You are a big fellow and a few years ago, you were forced to drill one weekend with the town militia. They even gave you two spears, one for stabbing and one for throwing. Other than that, you have no idea how you got involved with all this commotion. Still, they at least feed you regularly.

One thing you know, your new bosses are real scary. They got powers and all sorts of *maggy-cal* what-nots. You understand not a lick of it, but that's nothing new.

They say they need you to do a mission. It seems doubtful you'll understand that any more than you understand anything else. Still, you never know. Sometimes great ideas come from the mouths of babes.

Personality

You are a clueless turnip farmer way out of his depth. Swept up by an unlikely series of events, you are now involved with stuff that is way above your comprehension. But with that said, you are eager to prove yourself to your new "friends".

In truth, you are not an evil person (probably you are the only minion who can honestly say that). You are simply a country bumpkin. If you really understood what this group was trying to accomplish, you would likely be horrified. But the chances of you putting together all that is going on, are basically nil.

That said, you are far from useless. You are the best unarmed brawler of anyone you've met in a long time. You are tough and good with your spear. Just don't try anything too ambitious. You are a simple fellow after all.

Tech and Talingarde

On page 59 of Book Four in the library of the mighty dragon Eiramanthus there are a collection of books that are described thusly:

"If the magic can be removed, this library is a true treasure. There is information here that could advance technology in Talingarde a hundred years. Amongst these texts is the science necessary to invent a microscope, a crude steam turbine and a cannon. If the books were sold to collectors they would net 30,000 gp. But their true value comes to light if the PCs succeed in ascending to the throne of Talingarde and sponsor the developments described within these books. With this learning, they could transform Talingarde into not a wicked kingdom, but a *technologically advanced* wicked kingdom. More details about ruling Talingarde can be found in Book Six."

But you can search Book Six high and low, and you will find not a hint of how to transform Talingarde into a technologically advanced wicked kingdom. The truth is that I, gentle reader, forgot to include this in Book Six. I put it in my notes. I even wrote a few thousand words on the subject. And somewhere along the way it got cut. And though I genuinely intended to restore the material, that never happened ... until now.

Here then are those notes revised and expanded and at last restored to their proper place. This is material is intended to be used in Book Six, Act Two. This is in effect the thirty first event in that chapter.

Here is an important caveat. This material is not likely to please all gamers. This material effectively transforms Talingarde, in a very few years, from a late medieval society to an early renaissance society complete with guns, water clocks and optics and the like. For some this might very well violate their idea of what a fantasy roleplaying game should be like.

And this material is easy to ignore. All you have to do is proclaim that while the books are interesting, they are simply too advanced to be of any immediateuse. Perhaps after a hundred years of study, the advances detailed within will be truly understood. But for now, reading these books is much the same as if someone handed an electronics catalog to cavemen. It is simply beyond the people of Talingarde.

What follows are three pages dedicated to those who don't fear mixing in a little science with their villainy. We enter now into the arena of cruel technology being used to crush the pure heroism of what will soon be a bygone age. It's heady stuff and all too appropriate for those who walk the Way of the Wicked.

Step One: Understanding the Books

Time: ***3 months to study these esoteric tomes***

It is one thing to be handed a book about advanced future technology. It is another thing entirely to understand those books. Researching the books takes three months of uninterrupted research by any PC or NPC who wants to make the following skill checks. During that time they can do nothing else, so all consuming is this labor. At the end of that period, they must make ten separate ability and skill checks in this order. As they progress through these checks, they'll earn Research Points (RPs). The usefulness of these points is explained in Step Two below.

Before the research team begins, one person is designated the head researcher, in charge of coordinating all this learning and directing what should be focused upon. Obviously intelligence is an important prerequisite for such a position. Equally certain is that the skills knowledge (arcana), knowledge (engineering), linguistics, craft (alchemy), craft (weapons) and profession (scribe) or profession (engineer) will be of value on this team.

It is unlikely that the PCs will have all these skills themselves, so they will probably bring in some NPC researchers to aid them. The PCs can hire experts with a +16 in any of those skills (in total) for 1000 gp per month. No doubt these experts will come from the universities of Ghastenhall or perhaps even further afield.

Feel free to award a +2 modifier to any roll where a PC comes up with a good reason why they would have special insight into a given research challenge.

#1: Intelligence Check (DC 20) by the head researcher

This roll discovers if the head researcher has truly managed to wrap their head around just how advanced and expansive this material truly is.

Failure: 0 RP
Success (DC 20): 1 RP
DC 25: 2 RP and a +2 to all skill checks below
DC 30+: 3 RP, a +2 to all skill checks below and one +10 on a single research roll of the head researcher's choice. This represents an almost miraculous breakthrough.

#2: Knowledge (Engineering) DC 25

First, the team must understand the basic logic and symbolism of the many diagrams and schematics they've uncovered. Add +2 for every language on the following list the team can read: aboleth, aklo, celestial, draconic, and infernal.

Spells like *comprehend languages* do not grant these language bonuses. To get the bonus, the languages with their many nuances must be understood to better reveal the perspective of the alien minds behind these diagrams and drawings.

Failure: 0 RP and add 1 month to Step Two.
Success (DC 25): 1 RP
DC 30: 2 RP
DC 35+: 3 RP

#3: Knowledge (Engineering) DC 30

This roll allows access to deeper secrets of the technology described in these books. Instead of just understanding how to reproduce these items by rote, this represents real understanding of the principles espoused by these esoteric tomes.

Failure: 0 RP
Success (DC 30): 1 RP
DC 35: 2 RP
DC 40+: 3 RP

#4: Knowledge (Engineering) DC 35

To succeed at this roll, the researcher must be one of this planes most accomplished engineers. Success here indicates that the researcher is fathoming technology like centuries ahead of the standard technology of Talingarde.

Failure: 0 RP
Success (DC 35): 1 RP
DC 40: 2 RP
DC 45+: 3 RP

#5: Knowledge (Arcana) DC 25

The technology here often seamlessly combines arcane magic and engineering together, so it helps to know both.

Failure: 0 RP and add 1 month to Step Two
Success (DC 25): 1 RP
DC 30: 2 RP
DC 35+: 3 RP

#6 Knowledge (Arcana) DC 30

Here the researcher continues to delve into the deeper mysteries of this project.

Failure: 0 RP
Success (DC 30): 1 RP
DC 35: 2 RP
DC 40+: 3 RP

#7 Knowledge (Arcana) DC 35

These are the truly deepest and greatest of arcane secrets hidden within these tomes. To succeed on this roll is to truly start to understand that the artificial distinction between the arcane arts and the sciences is in fact just that. It is a distinction adhered to by lesser minds who have not come to understand the true nature of the universe!

Failure: 0 RP
Success (DC 35): 1 RP
DC 40: 2 RP
DC 45+: 3 RP

#8 Craft (Alchemy) DC 30

Theory will only get you so far. Now we enter into the realm of the practical. It is one thing to spend weeks deciphering an obscure alchemical concoction. It is another thing to begin its manufacture.

Failure: 0 RP
Success (DC 30): 1 RP
DC 35: 2 RP
DC 40+: 3 RP

#9 Craft (Weapons) DC 30

Theories and abstract concepts mean little upon the battlefield. You must turn these esoteric mechanisms into destructive devices so simple and so durable that even common soldiery can use them. This is no easy challenge, but with your skill in the arts of weapon manufacturing, you are up to the challenge!

Failure: 0 RP
Success (DC 30): 1 RP
DC 35: 2 RP
DC 40+: 3 RP

#10 Profession (Scribe or Engineer) DC 25

It is not enough merely to learn the secrets described in these books. They must also be written down and made into schematics that engineers and skilled craftsmen can use to create the wondrous devices the PCs hope to see have practical use throughout their kingdom and upon the battlefield.

Failure: 0 RP and add two months to Step Two
Success (DC 25): 0 RP
DC 30: 1 RP
DC 35: 2 RP and subtract 1 month from Step Two
DC 40+: 3 RP and subtract 3 months from Step Two

Step Two: Using the Research

Time: ***6 months***

Total up the RP from Step One and consult this chart:

0 - 5: Abject Failure. Nothing useable has been gained by the research done in Step One. In fact, by leaping to conclusions and making false assumptions, this so-called research is actually worse than useless. If the same research team tries again, they start a -2 RP and must dig their way out of this hole. If that same team arrives at this total again, they are finished. The books are worthless to them. A new team and a new research head are needed if any progress is going to be made from this collection.

6 - 9: Still Working On It. You've made progress, but not enough progress to be really practical. Your RP total resets to zero and you may try Step One again. However, this time your experience grants you a +2 to every roll. This bonus stacks with any others the research team may earn, but is only useful on one cycle of Step One rolls.

10-12: An accomplishment! You may perform Step Two (which usually takes six months unless modified by rolls from Step One). At the end, the research head may choose a single accomplishment from the list below. The RP total resets to zero.

13-16: An accomplishment and there is more! As 10-12 above, but if the research team returns to do more research (i.e. tries Step One again), they do so with a +2 to every roll. Again, this bonus only applies to one cycle.

17-20: Two accomplishments! You may perform Step Two (which usually takes six months unless modified by rolls from Step One). At the end, the research head may choose two accomplishments from the list below. The RP total resets to zero.

21-24: Two accomplishments and there is more! As 17-20 above, but if the research team returns to do more research (i.e. tries Step One again), they do so with a +2 to every roll. Again, this bonus only applies to one cycle.

25-29: Three accomplishments! You may perform Step Two (which usually takes six months unless modified by rolls from Step One). At the end, the research head may choose three accomplishments from the list below. The RP total resets to zero.

30: Revelation! As 25-29 above, but so complete is the team's understanding of these documents, that they receive a permanent +4 to all rolls in Step One and Step Two's time cost is permanently halved. However, time cost can be decreased no further and this bonus can only be received once.

Accomplishments

Each one of these entries count as one accomplishment. Those indented under another entry can only be accomplished after the item above it and in the order listed (so for example, you need Alchemical Theory 3 before you can take Alchemical Breakthrough!). Each one of these can only be taken once.

Advanced Dyes: With these, Talingarde can manufacture vividly colored clothing that some becomes in great demand abroad: +1,000 gp/month to Royal Income

Refinement of Manufacturing 1: +1,000 gp/month to royal income

Refinement of Manufacturing 2: +1,000 gp/month to royal income

Any Color You Can Imagine, We Can Make: No longer limited to natural dyes, the world becomes a more colorful place. +2.000 gp/month to royal income

Alchemical Theory: +2 to Craft (Alchemy) rolls in Step One.

Alchemical Theory 2: +1 to Craft (Alchemy) rolls in Step One (this stacks with above bonus).

Alchemical Theory 3: +1 to Craft (Alchemy) rolls in Step One (this stacks with above bonuses).

Alchemical Breakthrough!: If the Head Researcher is an alchemist, she make take one bonus discovery. Note that the character must still meet the other prerequisites for the discovery.

Arcane Theory: +2 to Knowledge (Arcana) rolls in Step One

Arcane Theory 2: +1 to Knowledge (Arcana) rolls in Step One (this stacks with above bonus).

Arcane Theory 3: +1 to Knowledge (Arcana) rolls in Step One (this stacks with above bonuses).

Arcane Breakthrough!: If the Head Researcher is a wizard, she make take one bonus arcane discovery. Note that the character must still meet the other prerequisites for the discovery.

Crude Cannons: +1 Might for 10,000 gp

Cannon Advance 1: +1 Might for 10,000 gp

Cannon Advance 2: +1 Might for 10,000 gp

Advanced Artillery: +2 Might for 20,000 gp

Improved Golem Production: Golems cost 10% less for any researcher in this team to produce (this requires Alchemical Theory 3 or Arcane Theory 3).

Improved Golem Production 2: Golems cost 15% less for any researcher in the team to produce (this replaces the above discount).

Clockwork Soldiers: +2 Might for 20,000 gp

Clockwork Soldiers 2: +2 Might for 20,000 gp

Clockwork Scouts: +2 Might for 20,000 gp

Clockwork Cavalry: +2 Might for 20,000 gp

Advanced Clockwork Soldiers: +2 Might for 20,000 gp

Improved Weapon Manufacturing: +2 to Craft (Weapons) rolls in Step One.

Improved Weapon Manufacturing 2: +1 to Craft (Weapons) rolls in Step One (stacks with above bonus).

Improved Weapon Manufacturing 3: +1 to Craft (Weapons) rolls in Step One (this stacks with above bonuses).

Mass Production of Masterwork Weaponry: +2 Might for 20,000 gp

Gun Powder Mass Production: +1 Might for 10,000 gp

Basic Handguns: +1 Might for 10,000 gp

Advanced Handguns: +1 Might for 10,000 gp

Units of Handgunners: +2 Might for 20,000 gp

Mass Production of Level One Potions: +2,000 gp/month to royal income (requires Alchemical Theory 3).

Optical Instruments (telescopes and microscopes): +2 to Knowledge (Engineering) checks in Step One

Advanced Drafting: +1 to Knowledge (Engineering) rolls in Step One (this stacks with above bonus).

Advanced Mathematics: +1 to Knowledge (Engineering) rolls in Step One (stacks with above bonuses).

Personal Revelation: The Head Researcher may take a bonus feat of Skill Focus in any skill used in Step One.

The Philosophies of a Thousand Worlds: +2 to the Intelligence check in Step One.

The Wizard's College

Another omission from Book Six, Act Two is the possibility of the PCs establishing Talingarde's first wizard's college. It was first mentioned in Book Three in Ghastenhall's Gazetteer and hinted at from time to time in the text. But when Book Six came out... not a word. This was again just the author (i.e. myself) forgetting.

So, we rectify this loose end now. If "Tech and Talingarde" (see above) was event number thirty one, this is Book Six, Act Two's event number thirty two.

The Dreams of Tiberius Feign

Throughout the entire course of this campaign, it has been made clear that the Mitrans are very suspicious of arcane magic. This suspicion has brought about a level of persecution that the PCs can capitalize upon. However, there are some individuals in Talingarde who have been working to change this situation long before our villains came upon the scene.

In Ghastenhall right now is the highest level non-PC wizard in all of Talingarde. His name is Tiberius Kallister Feign (N male human wizard 17) and starting a wizard's college here in his homeland has been his longtime dream. But every time he dared present such a proposal to the Darian regime, he was shot down. Not only was he told no, but was forced to listen to whispers that such a college would only become a haven for devil-worshippers and madmen. Priests of Mitra slandered wizards and sorcerers of every stripe, lumping scholarly erudite professors in the same category as demonspawn.

Professor Feign is completely non-political. He cares nothing for who rules Talingarde, but this anti-arcane attitude infuriates him. Still, he dares not raise too much of a stink. The reason for his inaction is his beliefs. Feign is also, rarity of rarities, an atheist in Talingarde. It's not that Tiberius does not believe in the gods' existence. He knows that these entities are real. However, he believes that the gods are just powerful outsiders no more worthy of worship than any other powerful creature. They should be studied and respected, certainly, but worshipped? Such is the refuge of ignorant fools, Tiberius would argue.

Tiberius is a genius and being a genius is smart enough to keep his controversial opinions to himself. And so he has taught various arcane subjects at the universities in Ghastenhall and quietly promoted arcane magic to the powers that be for decades. He is surrounded by dozens of devotees who study at his feet, even as he keeps his magical art largely secret. He has waited for the winds to change and with the new regime, at last he sees a chance.

Tiberius is, for our villains, an opportunity. If given the money and go ahead to start a magical college, he could in a few years turn Talingarde into a mage's haven. Not only would this bring powerful, largely non-Mitra worshipping individuals to the island, it would also allow the regime to have access to magic items and magical resources heretofore unavailable to Talingarde. In short, a wizard's college could be a great boon to the new regime.

The Wizard's Petition

It is possible that the PCs do not initiate this event. Tiberius Feign may come to them. If the PCs have done nothing within 2d6 months of becoming the rulers of Talingarde to indicate they are hostile to arcane spellcasters, then Tiberius Feign comes to Matharyn and petitions to speak with the king. The request is brought before the PCs and it is theirs to refuse if they so desire. If they do refuse, then Tiberius teleports back to Ghastenhall saddened that the more things change, the more things stay the same.

However, if the PCs accept, then Tiberius Feign comes before them. He is an old man, dressed in fine purple robes, the archetypical wizard with a long beard and eyes full of magic. Tiberius Feign does not arrive empty handed. He brings a gift to the king. His gift is a *tome of leadership and influence +2* (worth 55,000 gp). Truly it is a gift worthy of a king.

He is brief and to the point in his petition, saying this:

"Too long has the great nation of Talingarde suffered without a mage's college. Under the House of Darius, the Mitran's innate distrust of arcane magic blinded the king. This is not my first petition, my lords, and every time I petitioned for a college before a king named Markadian it was my burden to listen to so-called holy men besmirch the wizardly arts comparing it to demon worship and deviltry.

"I am not interested in politics, great lords. Who rules this island has never been my concern. But I hope that this new regime will put aside the ignorance of the past. I hope that you will grant me a charter to start a wizard's college in Ghastenhall. Even without a penny of funding from the crown, I can start this college if you will but give me permission. It will necessarily be a small affair at first. However, with an investment from the crown I can make the college larger and grander. With such a grant, I could help to organize a war wizard's college that could aid Talingarde in fighting off its enemies. I would humbly request a grant of 250,000 gp.

"But grant or no, thank you for hearing my petition. I hope that soon I can begin the great work of giving Talingarde its first wizard's college. Thank you, great lords."

Step One: The Charter

Tiberius is not kidding. If the PCs grab a piece of palace stationary and have the king write: "Tiberius Feign is granted charter to found a wizard's college in Ghastenhall", sign and seal it, then that's it. That's all Tiberius needs and he will leave the palace very happy with his charter under his arm.

Such a wizard's college will flourish, slowly, in Ghastenhall. It will split off from the True Ghaster university and be founded under the name "The Feign College of Wizardry". It will start small and largely remain small during the reign of the tyrants. However, even if the PCs do nothing, they benefit from this college's presence. When they muster their army, there are more arcane casters to hire because of this college, many of whom have no moral quandaries working for Asmodean tyrants. This gives the PCs a bonus of Might +1.

If the PCs do nothing else, that may be all this event entails. If the PCs refuse Tiberius Feign, then the wizard leaves their presence once more disappointed but unsurprised that a ruler without vision sits upon the Throne of Talingarde. This island, he grouses, seems to breed such. And he returns to Ghastenhall and to his pupils. He does nothing to aid the regime but also nothing to hinder it. No bonus or penalty is received to Might.

However, if the PCs give Tiberius money they can be more involved in the foundation of the college and writing its charter. They can help the college grow faster and be more formidable than it would otherwise and gain a more diverse set of benefits. For every 50,000 gp the PCs invest up to maximum of 250,000 gp, they receive a Charter Point (or CP). So the PCs may acquire up to a maximum of 5 CP. Donations over 250,000 make the college more opulent but have no game effect.

A College of Our Own

Tiberius is not an essential part of starting a college. If one of the PCs is a powerful wizard, they may want to start a college on their own, without the interference or input of Tiberius Feign. If so, then there are two possibilities. One is to refuse a charter to Tiberius and grant a monopoly to the PC. The other is to allow two magical colleges to be founded.

For a PC to found a magical college takes three months and a 100,000 gp. If this is done as a monopoly, then the college grants a Might +1 as normal. If Tiberius is also granted a charter then for no additional cost, then the base Might benefit increases to +2. However, the competition makes the battle for resources slightly more expensive. Charter Points cost 60,000 gp each (to a maximum of 5 CP costing 300,000 gp).

Spending Charter Points

So what are charter points good for? They allow the PCs to shape the college into a form they find more useful. Instead of relying upon what Tiberius Feign thinks is important, they have a say from the very beginning.

These options should not be presented as mechanical rewards. Instead, read the first sentence in each block as the quick benefit and then have the PCs put their points based on those "quick descriptions". Thus the PCs should choose college priorities without precisely understanding the repercussions of those investments.

Arcane Warfare College: The college is required to have a part of the college dedicated to training wizards for military service in the Talingarde army. As a result, the PCs can field units of war wizards. Every CP spent requires 100 wizards ready to be fielded in service to the regime and that gains a +1 Might (up to a maximum of +5).

Artificer's College: The college is required to have a school and a curriculum focused on the creation to magical items that then become available to upper level members of the regime (i.e. the PCs). The PCs may buy magic items at 10% discount per CP (up to a maximum of 50%) invested. The college can only produce a maximum of 30,000 gp (in normal sale value) of such discounted magic items per month regardless of how many CP are spent. However, this production may be "saved up" from month to month to create a single large magic item. This represents a major class project done helmed by one the professors.

Magical Foundry: The Charter requires that the college create a certain number of minor magical items per month (mostly +1 weapons and armor and healing potions) of use to military units and donate these to the army. As a result, many more of the officers of the army now have magical gear. +1 to Might for every CP spent on this option (to a maximum of +5).

The Potion Trade: The college is required to sell all of the viable potions made by the students, with the funds being collected by the regime. Talingarde becomes a substantial exporter of potions and alchemical preparations to the mainland. A portion of these funds go to the government. For every CP dedicated to this, the royal government gains an income of 3,000 gp/month (to a maximum of 15,000 gp).

Research Focus: The college is required to focus on the sort of pure research useful in developing more complex and costly projects. For every CP spent on this, advanced projects (detailed below) cost 10% less in money (to a maximum of 50% off).

Step Two: Advanced Projects

After the charter is finished and the college is founded, the PCs need do nothing else with it. The Wizard's College can be allowed to run for the rest of their regime's run (i.e. whatever remains of the three years). Still, for arcane-focused characters, this may not be enough. They may want to use the college to build a Talingarde where arcane magic is resurgent. If so, then Advanced Project actions are a possible way to do this.

Advanced Project: The Undead Army

Time: ***3 months to organize necromancers and "dig up" the troops***

The PCs can use their magical college to attract necromancers, once hated outlaws in Talingarde. The necromancers can be coaxed into building for the PCs a great undead horde. The casualties of Falling Bridge and even Fire-Axe's old servants can rise once more and become the PCs newest army. Even rebels, executed for opposing the new regime, can now serve the Tyrants of Talingarde.

The cost here is not inconsequential. Powerful necromantic spells require expensive components and necromancers do not work for cheap. Still, between providing them with components and protection from the law the PCs can build a great and terrible undead army.

However the PCs build this army, its mere existence horrifies the population. Assess a -3 penalty to Might for employing an undead army. However, for every 10,000 gp the PCs invest in their undead army, they can buy a +1 Might of Undead up to a maximum of +15 (for a 150,000 gp investment). After that level, the PCs simply cannot find any more necromancers to do their grisly work at least in a time scale that is useful.

Advanced Project: One Hundred Wands for a Hundred Evokers

Time: ***3 months to purchase and organize such a unit***

Once the college is established, if the PCs have demonstrated their interest in seeing arcane magic flourish, the new head of the College of Evocation, a mad chap by the name of Rialto Gregario comes to them with a radical proposal. Rialto is not from Talingarde and bears the island no loyalty. He does however want to see this new college flourish and he has idea how to do it.

His suggestion is build a specialized unit of 100 college trained battle evokers armed with 100 5-charge *wands of fireball*. Trained by himself personally to coordinate fire using their own talents, these wizards could unlessh an unholy torrent of magical flame that would break up any conventional military unit that opposed them.

To organize such a unit would cost a princely sum. It will cost 150,000 gp (most of that to simply buy the wands)! Rialto promises great things from this unit of wizards. "It will crush anyone group who dares rise against you, great lords."

The truth is that Rialto is over-promising. While it is true that such a unit could do great damage to enemies, it is actually not very cost effective. The real weak spot here is the evokers who must man the wands. Many of them will necessary have to be local wizards and a good deal of such local talent will simply refuse to fight. When the unit does show up to fight, it does manage to unleash a few potent fireball barrages, but the idea that it completely devastates the enemy proves to be unrealistic.

Spending the 150,000 gp nets the PCs a total of a +3 bonus to Might. There are certainly many more efficient ways they could have spent that money. A DC 30 Profession (Soldier) skill check will recognize the tactical limitations of this project.

Advanced Project: The Staff of the Magi

Time: ***None, this project takes only money***

One of the wizards in the college has a breakthrough and believes he can manufacture the legendary artifact, the *staff of the magi*. This wizard, a foreign visionary named Rashad Al-Muthara needs but three things to accomplish this task: a horn from a great dragon (Nythoggr or Chargammon will do), access to planar travel (such as *plane shift*) to visit the legendary City of Brass to buy what he needs and 250,000 gp to purchase the rare components necessary.

The PCs may balk, but the wizard is certainly passionate about the project and convinced that he can succeed where so many others have failed. He honestly claims that if provided with all he needs in three months he can produce that most legendary of artifacts, the *staff of the magi*. If the PCs buy into this and provide Rashad with what he needs, have a PC roll an unmodified 1d20 and consult this chart.

1: Rashad is mad. He destroys himself and all the resources provide him. This project is a total loss.

2-5: Rashad fails miserably or maybe was a fraud all along. After three months, the wizard flees Talingarde. The PCs can hunt him down if they wish, but he has only 50,000 gp in remaining wealth. The rest is a loss.

6-10: Rashad is overly optimistic on this project taking only 3 months. After 1d4 more months and roll again on this chart.

11-15: Rashad has done it! Almost. He has produced a weaker version of the *staff of the magi.* It's caster level is only 18, it holds only 10 charges and it grants spell resistance 19. Its retributive strike also does only half damage as normal. But otherwise, it is a *staff of the magi*.

16-20: Rashad has done it! He has created an actual *staff of the magi* in all its glory.

This project can only be attempted once.

Advanced Project: The Trade Gate

Time: ***2 months to activate the gate***

Tiberius Feign is capable of casting the spell *Teleportation Circle* and *Permanency*. He has also has contacts on the mainland to other wizard colleges. These facts together mean that savvy players can come up with a scheme to bypass the long sea voyage between Talingarde and the mainland and become wealthy merchants.

Note that this is the sort of idea that the idealistic Headmaster Feign will never come up with on his own. Instead, it will have to be suggested to him. Certainly, Feign will agree to do this, if the PCs will fund certain research he is working on. Altogether including Feign's grant and the cost of components, establishing this gate will cost a total of 50,000 gp.

As soon as the gate is established, the PCs are able to immediately begin trading for all sorts of goods that are not available in Talingarde. The PCs can use these goods for three potential ends: pure profit, pure propaganda or a mix of the two.

If used for pure profit, the gate nets 10,000 gp/month for income. There are simply vast amounts of money to be made in such an enterprise.

If used for pure propaganda, the PCs can spend 5,000 gp a month buying luxury goods and distributing them to those who bow down before their rule. This expenditure makes them many friends and grants a one-time bonus of +3 Might after the PCs maintain these bribes for at least 6 months.

If used for a mix, the PCs can make 5,000 gp a month and use the rest for bribes, gaining a +1 Might bonus after six months.

Regardless, the gate increases the goods available in Talingarde and soon the citizens of Matharyn have access to foreign liquors, silk clothing, exotic spices and other luxury goods that were all but unknown in Talingarde. Even if the PCs succeed at nothing else, they have made Talingarde a more cosmopolitant place to live.

Advanced Project: The Clockwork Dragon

Time: ***3 months to build a clockwork dragon***

The PCs may realize that they are likely to face Antharia Regina in the battle to come and may want to build some sort of countermeasure. What could be a more effective countermeasure than building their own clockwork dragon?

Never an easy project, with the resources of the college is could be made slightly easier. The PCs still need to come up with the 162,500 gp for materials and equipment to build these massive constructs, but beside that all the other requirements can be met by experts at the college. Further, the PCs can divide up work amongst several teams and cut the time of production from almost six months to a measely three.

The only thing that the college cannot provide is an 18th level caster with the craft golem feat and hopefully that's what the PC who is in in charge of production brings to the table. Once the first clockwork dragon is made, the PC in charge of the project may make a DC 35 Knowledge (arcana) roll. If success, the PC realizes that using this setup for half cost (only 81,250 gp), they could make another identical clockwork dragon with another three months work.

Once built, the PCs can do several things with these metal monsters. First, they are simply very impressive. These huge gleaming draconic miracles of magical technology are terrifying simply by their very nature. By parading them around Matharyn and other major population centers, they strike fear into the heart of their enemies. Some people who were enthusiastic to join the Princess Bellinda and her rebel army of the White Unicorn instead stay home. Might +1.

At the Battle of Second Tamberlyn, the PCs can choose to either have their metal dragons attack enemies on their own (in which case they grant a Might +2 if there is only one of them or a Might +5 if there are two). The dragons tear into the enemy ranks and inflict massive casualties against their foes. However, if the PCs are defeated, then it is assumed that these dragons were also destroyed in that climactic battle.

If instead, the PCs choose to keep them close, then they grant no benefit to Might but when the PCs fight the individual battles, they have a pair of Clockwork dragons at their side (potentially CR 18 allies altogether). They will doubtless be of great aid.

The Clockwork Dragon	CR 16

XP 76,800
hp 177 (see the clockwork dragon entry bestiary 4)

Land of Endless Night

In Book Four of Way of the Wicked, page 100-101, we presented an outline for running the campaign as a vampiric adventure campaign instead of one focused on worshippers of Asmodeus. However, the outline was very rushed (as space required it to be) and details were sparse. In the next four pages, we're going to expand upon those ideas and present a more complete exploration of that idea. Further, we're going to present the vampires with a truly wicked potential conclusion. The legendary artifact known as *The Chalice of Aurelius Vestromo* is actually the key to a potent and evil ritual that will forever cast Talingarde into darkness and make it the world's greatest haven for the undead. When your undead villains are through, they will transform poor Talingarde forever into a land of endless night.

The Madness of Adrastus Thorn

As is mentioned in the outline, Cardinal Adrastus Thorn fell madly in love with the beautiful Bronwyn of Balentyne. But when she was denied to him, he instead became obsessed with revenge against the bloodline of Havelyn and the nation of Mitran worshippers who had denied him his beloved. Never mind that Bronwyn herself had denied the monstrous Thorn, she was brainwashed and deceived by the hated Mitrans. Without their deceitful influence, she could have loved him. Thorn is sure of this.

Now that Thorn has been freed by Sakkarot Fire-Axe, he begins to search the old blaspemous collection of tomes he has amassed over the centuries. In one, he found mention of the vampiric artifact *The Chalice of Aurelius Vestromo.* He also discovered hints about a daemonic ritual so ancient and blasphemous that no mortal has ever dared to carry it out. The ritual was hidden in a destroyed temple known as the Horn of Abaddon. The tome hinted that this ritual could turn an entire nation in to a land of eternal night where undeath would forever thrive. The ritual was known as the *Triumphus ex Eques Pallidus* (lit. Triumph of the Pale Horseman).

This was no ritual conceived by a mortal mind. Instead the eldest of the four, the Pale Horseman himself, the Daemonic Prince of Death had created and gifted this horror to the prime material plane centuries ago. No mortal had ever been twisted, brave or foolish enough to attempt the ritual. But Thorn was no mere mortal. He was a vampiric lord driven by madness and a thirst for vengeance. He would bring Talingarde to its knees and wipe out its royal lineage. And then just at the Mitran's defeat would seem that it could be no more complete, he would deny them even their precious sun.

The Ritual

Needless to say this ritual is not easy to complete. Five blood altars must be built in key leyline conjunctions about the island. At each conjunction, a powerful living being must be sacrificed into the *Chalice of Aurelius Vestromo*. This will forever taint the fundamental nature of the island and change it forever.

The altars themselves must be built to exact specifications and cost 50,000 gp and a month of work to construct (a magic item such as a *lyre of building* turns this time into a day, if it can be properly wielded).

The first altar must be built in Matharyn within the Old Palace itself and either King Markadian V or the Princess Bellinda must be sacrificed upon its stone. No one else will do.

The second altar must be built in the heart of the Caer Bryr and it must be anointed with the blood of the Caothach Ool (see Book Six, page 37).

The third altar must be built in the far north in the Cairn of Nythoggr. Upon that altar must sacrificed a powerful elven spellcaster (Level 18+). The most likely candidate is Queen Carnaya of the ice-elves. Carnaya has never received full statistics and is only mentioned briefly in Book 6 on pg. 48 (Event Sixteen: War in the North). There she is described as a CN female elven ranger level 20. But for this, it is necessary to use the statistics for the Ice Maiden from the NPC Codex (an elven level 10 sorcerer/level 10 dragon disciple) with her draconic powers reskinned as powers granted by primal ice spirits and her alignment changed to CN. She is attended and protected by her three consorts (use the Daredevil Hunter, an elf ranger 17 from the NPC Codex).

The fourth altar must be built at Uzat Angor, within the cavern of Ygg and Ygotha, and the blood of the shoggoths must be used to anoint the stone (see Book Six, pp 63-66 for more details).

The fifth and final altar must built in Valtaerna. The altar must be built at the pinnacle of Suchandra's mountain. Nine angels (each of at least 12 HD) must have their blood drained and fed to the artifact.

Then, the ritual is complete and a permanent veil of twilight is cast over the land. At full noon, the sun is only ever as bright as the cloudiest of days. Plants and crops will still grow but only at half their previous productivity. People starve and suffer. However, the undead thrive. Within the confines of the ritual, no natural sunlight ever reaches the ground. Vampires may roam this land of eternal night at will.

Sir Richard, The Light's Last Hope

Talingarde will not be cast into darkness without a fight, of course. And the best hope for that victory is perhaps the fearless vampire hunter, Sir Richard Thomasson. After his father was killed by vampires when they infiltrated and drained the life from from the watchtower Balentyne, Sir Richard has dedicated his life to slaying these undead abominations. Thus, you should rebuild Sir Richard as a paladin with the undead scourge archetype to represent this focus.

He will appear for the first time as the PCs try to conquer the Horn of Abaddon in Book Two. He will appear again alongside the king trying to purge the vampires that infest and threaten to destroy sacred Valtaerna (the end of Book Three). And he will fight Chargammon, the enlisted agent of the vampire menace, to defend the Princess Bellinda in the final scene of Book Four.

The subplot that should be removed is that Sir Richard never falls to "vampirism" (as opposed to the worship of Asmodeus as he does when he became Sir Berithor, the antipaladin in Book Six). Thorn does still raise Sir Richard from the dead at the end of Book Two and for much the same reason as in the regular campaign. The vampire Adrastus Thorn still loves Bronwyn and Sir Richard is her son. To destroy Sir Richard is to completely eradicate Bronwyn's legacy from the world and Thorn cannot bear to see it done. Thus the cruel and ruthless Thorn has one point of weakness - this vampire-hunting paladin.

When the PCs defeat him again in Act Two of Book Five, he is instead saved by Bellinda, who has fallen in love with him. He joins Bellinda and will accompany her at the Second Battle of Tamberlyn (the climactic conclusion of Book Six). Since vampires are very powerful, it is probably a good idea to give Bellinda another ally to make the final fight more challenging.

Here then is presented a level 20 Vampire-slaying focused build of Sir Richard. This Sir Richard can stand aside his beloved Bellinda at Second Talingarde, smiting and destroying the undead legions that rise against him. He is a dangerous opponent for vampiric foes.

And if you decide to run the campaign with the Darkness Defeated option, Sir Richard can be a part of why the PCs are defeated. Sir Richard has not taken the field alone. His heroic deeds have been heard far and wide by the knights of the Alerion. Now amongst their ranks there are hundreds of undead scourge paladins, inspired by this single paragon. The PCs may come to Tamberlyn with an army of vampire spawn, but these undead hunters will be the preferred pray of the paladin army that meets them beneath the shadow of the Lords.

Sir Richard Thomasson, Fearless Vampire Hunter — CR 20

XP 307,200
Male human paladin (undead scourge) 20
LG Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Perception +2
Aura courage (10 ft., faith (10 ft.), life (10 ft.), righteousness (10 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 36, touch 15, flat-footed 35 (+12 armor, +4 deflection, +1 Dex, +3 natural, +6 shield)
hp 254 (20d10+140)
Fort +29, **Ref** +21, **Will** +25
Defensive Abilities divine grace +7; Immune disease, fear; DR 10/evil

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.
Melee *+3 longsword* +31/+26/+21/+16 (1d8+10/17-20) or *+3 longsword smite power attack* (w/ holy sword cast) +35/+30/+25/+20 (1d8+44+2d6 vs. evil/17-20)
Special Attack channel positive energy (DC 28, 10d6), smite evil 7/day (+7 attack and AC, +20 damage), undead annihilation (DC 27)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +27)
At Will—*detect evil*

Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 17th; concentration +24)
4th—death ward, *holy sword (x2), resounding blow*
3rd—*blade of bright victory, litany of escape, litany of sight, prayer, sanctify armor*
2nd—*bestow grace (2),litany of righteousness, resist energy,* righteous vigor, *wake of light*
1st—*bless, detect undead, divine favor, knight's calling* (DC 18), *protection from evil, rally point*

TACTICS

Before Combat If given the chance, Sir Richard casts *holy sword, deathward, sanctify armor, prayer* and *resist energy*. He will also cast *bestow grace* on Bellinda

During Combat Sir Richard is only too eager to leap into the fray and smite evil (his smite is particularly effective against the undead). When dealing with vampires he smites as often as he can hopefully wielding his holy sword and surrounded by a blazing aura of Mitran majesty.

He is quick to use his litanies as well as well as *resounding blow,* so be sure to note the effects of these spells. He also uses his lay on hands ability on himself (a swift action) to keep himself healed and in the fight.

Morale Sir Richard will fight to the death to defeat his enemies and to purge Talingarde of this vampiric scourge.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 18, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 24
Base Atk +20/+15/+10/+5; **CMB** +27; **CMD** 41
Feats Cleave, Cleaving Finish, Great Cleave, Extra Mercy, Improved Cleaving Finish, Improved Critical, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)
Skills Diplomacy +30, Knowledge (religion) +23, Sense Motive +25
Languages Common
SQ aura of good, divine bond (weapon +6), holy champion, lay on hands (10d6, 17/day), mercies (sickened, diseases, curse, poison, blinded,deafened, paralyzed, stunned)
Traits Resilient: +1 trait bonus to Fortitude saves
Hatred of Vampires: +1 damage to vampires
Combat Gear 3 *potions of cure serious wounds*
Other Gear *+3 longsword, +3 full plate, +3 heavy steel shield, amulet of natural armor +3, belt of physical perfection +6, headband of alluring charisma +6, cloak of resistance +4, ring of protection +4, ring of sustenance,* silver holy symbol, 135 gp, a silver swatch of cloth marked with a white unicorn (the favor of the Princess Bellinda)

Thorn as a Vampire Lord

In the vampiric version of "Way of the Wicked" Cardinal Adrastus Thorn was never a follower of Asmodeus and never a lich. In fact, "Empire of Night" completely removes the dynamic of Asmodeus vs. Mitra and replace sit with Vampires vs. Mitra. Instead Thorn is an ancient vampire lord who has long afflicted the realms of the living.

Thorn was born Tefet Nakt, an ancient noble from a now long lost and distant kingdom. He has not seen his homeland in centuries and today only a few scholars of esoteric lore could find it on the map. Tefet always had a gift for magic and was even inducted into a priesthood of the god of the magic. It was this very gift that drew the attention of his sire. Tefet was transformed by an ancient vampire princess, whose bloodline stretched back to dim antiquity. He spent centuries under her tutelage before he finally slew his own mistress and became a lord in his own right.

Since then he has moved quietly amongst the mortals, often posing as a holy man of some sort (his favorite cover). The monster once called Tefet took a particular glee in turning priests into the undead and watching their inevitable descent into subhuman bestiality and monstrousness. He has haunted the temples and cathedrals of a hundred faiths across vast oceans of time. Truly, he was affliction to this world.

In time, Cardinal Thorn (as he was now calling himself) came to the Kingdom of Talingarde. Talingarde was not the greatest of nation. It was neither the most powerful or the most influential. Indeed it was an isolated island kingdom far from the center of the world. It seemed an likely target for this powerful vampire lord.

Perhaps he was drawn there by its purity and the vigor of its blood. Perhaps it is simple blind chance. Whatever the reason, it was Thorn who first infected some of the noble Barcans (principle amongst them Prince Gaius Vestromo) and tainted the bloodline of the ruling house of Talingarde.

Talingarde seemed poised to fall under his subtle machinations, but then there arose amongst the Tallireans a hero. This hero was Markadian of House Darius. He learned of the vampiric threat that grew within his own homeland and set out to cleanse this threat forever from his people. It was at the Battle of Tamberlyn that the forces of the vampire-infected House Barca met House Darius and his followers on the field of battle. it was there that Markadian slew the dhamphir king, King Jaraad of Barca, and took the throne.

The first years of Markadian's reign were bloody. He purged the vampire nobility of House Barca. He spared only the uncorrupted if they would but renounce the undead and swear fealty to the House of Darius and the vampire hating sun god, Mitra. Most did so eagerly and soon vampires were all but exterminated in Talingarde. Talingarde, which was once known as a haven for the undead, instead became free of these monsters.

Alas, they missed one. The root of this vampirism, Adrastus Thorn remained hidden. He infiltrated the newly ascendant Church of Mitra and soon rose to be one of its Cardinals. It seemed he was poised to start another great outbreak of vampirism when Thorn became distracted. He was distracted neither by kings nor by power. No, Thorn had met ... her.

Adrastus and Bronwyn's story is detailed in Book Four. Suffice to say that he offered her immortality, she refused and the incident ended in Thorn being staked and brought to the Savage North. The disaster very nearly destroyed the powerful vampire lord.

Cardinal Thorn is now free once more. He has called his greatest progeny from the mainland, the vampire sorceress Tiadora, to aid him. His building an island spanning conspiracy of nine vampiric covens all dedicated to bringing about Talingarde's fall and to create a new paradise for the undead. He has constructed a new scheme to bring down the four pillars that keep Talingarde intact and alive. His new plans involves relatively few vampires and instead he will use a great bugbear horde led by Sakkarot Fire-Axe (to whom he has promised eventual immortality).

Thorn is almost insane with vengeance. He will not stop until all of Talingarde is cloaked in eternal night and the living are hunted like animals. He is content to hide no longer. He will show the entire world what it means to be ruled by the undead. Talingarde will burn for what it did to him!

The truth is that is even though Thorn has escaped from his stake and his coffin, he never recovers from his love for Bronwyn. She was everything to him. She was a last chance to actually be alive. This campaign is not only the story of the PC's rise to power. It is also the story of Cardinal Thorn's fall. He has lost his focus and soon enough his children will realize this and turn upon him.

What is happening to Thorn is what happened to his own mistress so many centuries ago. Thorn served her faithfully for centuries and then, when she became weak, he destroyed her and became the master. Now it is Thorn's time to fall.

Cardinal Adrastus Thorn, Vampire Lord of Talingarde	CR 22

XP 615,000
Male human vampire sorceror 20
NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid)
Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 35, touch 21, flat-footed 28 (+4 armor, +4 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +10 natural)
hp 392 (20d6+320); fast healing 5
Fort +25, **Ref** +18, **Will** +21
Defensive Abilities channel resistance +6, **DR** 10/magic and silver; **Immune** cold, undead traits, **Resist** electricity 10
Weaknesses vampire weaknesses

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)
Melee slam +14/+9 (1d4+6 plus energy drain)
Special Attacks blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, dominate (DC 37), energy drain (2 levels, DC 35)

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th; concentration +35)
21/day—grave touch (10 rounds)
3/day—grasp of the dead (20d6 slashing, DC 35)
1/day—incorporeal form (20 rounds)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 20th; concentration +35)
9th (8/day)—energy drain (DC 36),power word kill, wail of the banshee (DC 36), wish
8th (8/day)—create greater undead, horrid wilting (DC 35), polar ray, protection from spells
7th (9/day)—finger of death (DC 34), mass hold person (DC 32), prismatic spray, waves of exhaustion
6th (9/day)—circle of death (DC 33), create undead, flesh to stone (DC 31), undeath to death (DC 33)
5th (9/day)—cloudkill (DC 30), cone of cold (DC 30), greater coffin ward, teleport, waves of fatigue
4th (9/day)—animate dead, contagion (DC 31), crushing despair (DC 29), solid fog, wall of ice (DC 29)
3rd (10/day)—dispel magic, gaseous form, ray of exhaustion (DC 30), seal against positive energy, vampiric touch
2nd (10/day)—blindness/deafness (DC 27), false life, invisibility, mirror image, scorching ray, spectral hand
1st (10/day)—chill touch (DC 28), heartbeat, mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement (DC 26), shield
0th (at will)—acid splash, bleed (DC 25), detect magic, disrupt undead, ghost sound (DC 25), prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, touch of fatigue (DC 27)

Bloodline undead

TACTICS

Before Combat Thorn has *see invisiible* permanently cast on himself and always has *mage armor* active. Before combat he casts *false life, shield, protection from spells* and *seal against positive energy.*
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During Combat Thorn is a powerful and incredibly versatile combatant. You should take some time to study his feats, spells and magic items to fully understand all his options. Also don't be afraid to customize some of his spells and gear to make Thorn a challenging opponent for your PCs. He is not an opponent they should be able to easily overcome.

Since it is likely that Thorn will be facing other vampires, he is prepared to fight the undead as much as the living. Using Thanatopic spell (a metamagic feat) he can have *finger of death* effect undead, catching his foes off guard. Thorn keeps on the move, flying above his foes casting powerful spells against them until they are defeated. He avoids melee at all costs, instead prefering for his minions to instead keep his adversaries away from him.

Morale Thorn realizes their is no putting off this battle with his rebellious progeny. He fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 22, **Con** —, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 40
Base Atk +10; CMB +14; CMD 30
Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dark Flight, Deceitful, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Greater Spell Focus (Necromancy), Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Improved Lightning Reflexes. Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Master Vampire, Skill Focus (Knowledge [Religion], Spell Focus (Necromancy), Spell Penetration, Sunlight Resistance, Thanatopic Spell, Threnodic Spell, Toughness, Vampiric Nobility
Skills Bluff +50, Diplomacy +39 (+41 w/ other vampires), Disguise +19, Intimidate +38, Knowledge (Arcana) +8, Knowledge (religion) +20, Perception +23, Sense Motive +23, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +12; **Racial** Bluff +8, Perception +8, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +8
Languages Common, Necril
Trait Honey-Tongue: +1 to Diplomacy, Diplomacy is class skill
SQ bloodline arcana (corporeal undead affected by humanoid-affecting spells), change shape (dire bat or wolf, *beast shape II*), gaseous form, one of us, shadowless, spider climb
Gear *amulet of natural armor +4, belt of physical might (Str, Dex) +4, cloak of resistance +4, headband of alluring charisma +6, ring of protection +4, robe of blending*, onyx gems (worth 10,000 gp), key to vault (2-20), Zaerabos' amulet

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blood Drain (Su) A vampire can suck blood from a grappled opponent; if the vampire establishes or maintains a pin, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The vampire heals 5 hit points or gains 5 temporary hit points for 1 hour (up to a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its full normal hit points) each round it drains blood.
Change Shape (Su) A vampire can use change shape to assume the form of a dire bat or wolf, as *beast shape* II.
Children of the Night (Su) Once per day, a vampire can call forth 1d6+1 rat swarms, 1d4+1 bat swarms, or 2d6 wolves as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the vampire for up to 1 hour.
Create Spawn (Su) A vampire can create spawn out of those it slays with blood drain or energy drain, provided that the slain creature is of the same creature type as the vampire's base creature type. The victim rises from death as a vampire in 1d4 days. This vampire is under the command of the vampire that created it, and remains enslaved until its master's destruction. Thorn may have enslaved spawn totaling no more than four times its own Hit Dice; any spawn it creates that would exceed this limit become free-willed undead. A vampire may free an enslaved spawn in order to enslave a new spawn, but once freed, a vampire or vampire spawn cannot be enslaved again.
Dominate (Su) A vampire can crush a humanoid opponent's will as a standard action. Anyone the vampire targets must succeed on a Will save or fall instantly under the vampire's influence, as though by a *dominate person* spell (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet.
Energy Drain (Su) A creature hit by a vampire's slam (or other natural weapon) gains two negative levels. This ability only triggers once per round, regardless of the number of attacks a vampire makes.
Gaseous Form (Su) As a standard action, a vampire can assume *gaseous form* at will (caster level 5th), but it can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability.
Shadowless (Ex) A vampire casts no shadows and shows no reflection in a mirror.
Spider Climb (Ex) A vampire can climb sheer surfaces as though under the effects of a *spider climb* spell.
Weaknesses Thorn is an old vampire and so is not as susceptible to some traditional vampire weaknesses. He is not repelled by garlic and immersion in running water does nothing. Only holy symbols of Mitra repel him. He laughs at the holy symbols of other gods (in particulary evil gods like Asmodeus)

The End of All Things

Maybe simply corrupting Talingarde is not enough for your villains. Perhaps your band of villains wants to do something even more terrible, even more classically villainous as their end goal of the campaign. Perhaps the PCs want to completely destroy Talingarde forever. And maybe there is a way to do it.

Naburus the pit fiend's goal was never simply to corrupt Talingarde and restore the worship of Asmodeus. Naburus was far more ambitious than that. He actually planned to join Talingarde physically with Avernus the first layer of hell. By doing he would make the nine hells larger and more magically powerful and would create for himself a portion of that plane to govern (the first step on the path to becoming a full ruler of one of the Nine Hells and joining the ranks of the Archdevils).

And why should the PCs cooperate with this servant of the pit? Naburus offers them an eternity as devils. With the pit fiend's aid, the PCs could be transformed into immortal, infernal servants of Naburus bypassing the usual slow journey through death that mortals must endure, starting as lemures and working their way up through the infernal ranks. In one master stroke, they would avoid grueling centuries of service and suffering (or so it would seem).

This is a mad plan. And it is the sort of plan that is only likely to appeal to the most devout and fervent of Asmodeus worshippers. It is one thing after all to merely conquer a land. This would be killing every man, woman and child in Talingarde. Actually that's not true, the lucky ones would merely die. The truly unlucky would become damned souls bound to doomed Talingarde. To say this act is merely evil is to a disservice to the scale of this insane genocide.

Still, if you have a party that has fully embraced the First Tyrant, it may be a worthy plot hook to present to them. It may make for a more fitting end goal than simply conquering Talingarde and restoring the infernal church of their master.

So how can this wicked deed be done?

The campaign is unchanged until the end of Book V. You need to add an item to Thorn's vault in Book V (Location 2-20 in the Agathium, pg. 75). The PCs find a book there bound in human skin written in an ancient form of infernal. This ragged tome is not particularly valuable on its own. However, this is the fabled *Carta Infernus* and it details the ritual necessary to accomplish this awful and irrevocable transformation.

Here is what the PCs need to do.

First, five great obelisks must be built across Talingarde, each one 666 feet high and made of cut black stone adorned with infernal script. The easiest way to build these monuments is to fashion a unique *lyre of building,* designed to erect these obelisks. The black stone must be quarried from Avernus itself, thus requiring some method of planar travel (such as *plane shift*).

As each obelisk is finished, a specific sacrifice must be made upon the top of the pillar that both proclaims the devotion of the builder and destroys another competing claim to the island kingdom of Talingarde.

The first pillar must be built in the center of the city of Matharyn and it must be anointed upon completion with the blood of the rightful ruler of the island (this would be the princess Bellinda).

The second pillar must be built in the heart of the Caer Bryr and it must be anointed with the blood of the Caothach Ool (see Book Six, page 37).

The third pillar must be built in the far north in Issengolth, realm of the ice-elves and their immortal queen Carnaya must be sacrificed upon the construct. Carnaya has never received full statistics and is only mentioned briefly in Book 6 on pg. 48 (Event Sixteen: War in the North). There she is described as a CN female elven ranger level 20.

But for this, it would probably be more interesting to use the statistics for the Ice Maiden from the NPC Codex (an elven level 10 sorcerer/level 10 dragon disciple) with her draconic powers reskinned as powers granted by primal ice spirits and her alignment changed to CN. She is attended and protected by her three consorts (use the Daredevil Hunter, an elf ranger 17 from the NPC Codex).

The fourth pillar must be built at Uzat Angor, within the cavern of Ygg and Ygotha, and the blood of the shoggoths must be used to anoint the stone (see Book Six, pp 63-66 for more details).

The fifth and final pillar must built in Valtaerna. Suchandra's mountain must be knocked down and replaced with a pillar. Nine angels (each of at least 12 HD) must be crucified on the iron barbs of this infernal monument.

The pillars may be built and unhallowed by their respective sacrifice in any order and once unhallowed, they are almost impossible to destroy. Their destruction requires an equally powerful sacrifice of a devil to weaken their foundations and bring the obelisks crashing down.

Once the five obelisks are built, the PCs are not yet complete. The *Carta Infernus* is vague on what happens next (likely the PCs will assume that the ritual is completed). However, this is not so. There is one final, terrible step that must be taken before Talingarde is truly doomed to be eternally cast into the nine hells.

By the time the PCs get to this part of the ritual, you should have completed the Way of the Wicked campaign as written. The Princess Bellinda did not return to Talingarde just to free her people. She knew of the terrible ritual that had begun upon her homeland. She knew that she was fighting not just for dominion over Talingarde, but for its right to even exist. It was using this battle cry that she was able to marshal the forces she brought to bear at the Second Battle of Tamberlyn. And it was for this cause that she was so willing to give her blood.

Only when Bellinda is slain can the first pillar be completed and thus, only then will Naburus appear and inform the PCs of the last part of the ritual. Our villains must die. They must commit ritual suicide, sacrificing themselves to Asmodeus. Only this mighty and irrevocable step will seal the ritual and bring Talingarde to hell.

Naburus pitches this gruesome deed like this:

The great and powerful pit fiend appears before you in a blast of fire and brimstone. He is no longer his haughty and arrogant usual self. Instead he seems stern and intent and bows to you, if only slightly.

"The war is over. Talingarde is claimed and I have sensed that the fifth pillar is completed. You have won a great victory here for our Master. Your work is completed upon this plane. There is only one final step and then all our striving here is ended.

"It is time to come home. Feel your power. Feel it flow through you. You are no longer entirely mortal. You have become something greater. You are no longer of this world. You have forsaken it and rightly so. What did these mortal worms ever do but reject you, despise you and cast you out. They called you the forsaken and branded you for the very deeds that should have earned you accolades and praise.

"You are ready, my brothers. You are ready to cast off these mortal coils and become true servants of Asmodeus. You will be immortal! Most who earn a place in the heirarchy of hell must begin as lowly lemures, barely sentient blobs of damned flesh. They are as much food as they are devil-kin. Most will never claw themselves out of that prison of flesh. But this is not for the likes of you. You are Asmodeus' chosen. You have done his great work and written your name across the pages of history in blood and stone."

The devil produces a sacred athame made of obsidian. The dagger seems to pulsate with fire and unholy life. "This is the Blade of Avernus, a sacred artifact of the pit. With it you can end this mortality and follow me to your new home. By this sacrifice, will the ritual be completed. By this sacrifice, will your labors be ended. By this sacrifice, will you escape this prison of mortal flesh and become what you were always destined to become.

"This cut I cannot make. The cut must be voluntarily and you must do it or the ritual will remain incomplete. The pain will pass. The exultation of infernal immortality....that is forever!" The pit fiends hand you the blade. It is warm in your hand like a living thing. What do you do?

This is it. Do the PCs commit ritual suicide for Asmodeus and lead Talingarde forever into damnation or do they cling to their immortality and leave their terrible work forever undone? That is their dilemma.

Naburus will answer a few questions, but largely he has little to add. This must be done exactly as he described to complete the ritual. No, there is no other way. No, there can be no substitute sacrifices. This is the only way to do this. And what will Hell be like after the deed is done? Naburus tries to be vague, but he will say whatever he thinks is necessary to get the PCs to do the deed. With a +31 Bluff skill, Naburus is no amateur liar.

If they choose not to commit suicide, then Naburus disappears once and for all, grimacing his disappointment with them. "You are still ours," he whispers. "I will find you after your death, and then you will understand what you have refused..." At this point, you are still finished with the campaign and should run the Epilogue as written (Book Six, pg. 89). But if they do finish the ritual then read this:

And so you accept the pit fiend's offer. One by one, you take the Blade of Avernus. The blade is sharp and with a final prayer to the dark lord, each of you takes your own life in a brutal rite of dark magic and bloodletting.

And then the fall... but you do not fall alone. The pillars glow and sing with unholy rapture. All the world seems to shatter. The mountains rip apart. The Godscar tears the island asunder. The doomed souls of Talingarde scream and panic as their island forever enters into legend, a cautionary tale of the price of trafficking with devils. And in one moment, Talingarde dies with you. Hell grows a little larger. And you awaken in a palace of black stone.

"Welcome, my slaves," says Naburus. "Come! It is time to pick another world ripe for damnation." Slaves...slaves! Once more you find yourself in prison, but from this one not even death is an escape. Welcome to damnation..."

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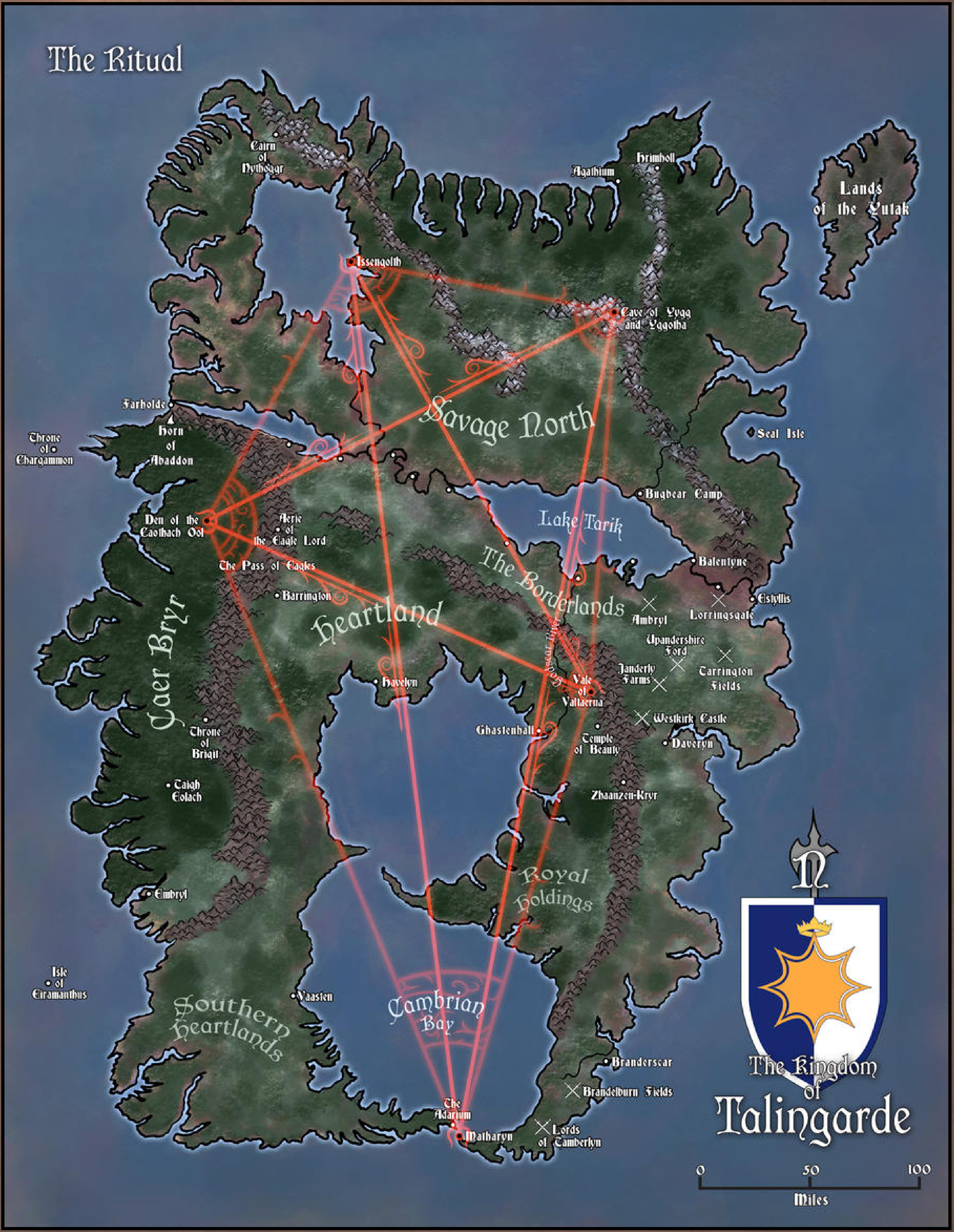
Hail Asmodeus, God of Lawyers, Master of Contracts

"There is no real ending. It's just the place where you stop the story." -- Frank Herbert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Vale of Valtaerna
Westkirk Castle
Ghastenhall
Temple of Beauty
Daveryn
Throne of Brigit
Taigh Eolach
Zhaanzen-Kryr
Royal Holdings
Embryl
Isle of Eiramanthus
Vaasten
Southern Heartlands
Cambrian Bay
Branderscar
Brandelburn Fields
The Adarium
Matharyn
Lords of Camberlyn
The Kingdom of Talingarde
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